

Great Patriotic War: Unknown Vonna

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This book completes the 5-volume history of the Great Patriotic War by Vladimir Beshanov. This is the result of 10 years of work on rethinking the Soviet past, a decisive revision of the military myths inherited from the Stalinist agitprop, an uncompromising polemic with historical officialdom. This is the bitter truth about the bloody 1945, which was not only the year of the Victory, but also the TROUBLE - it is not for nothing that many events of the last months of the war are still passed over in silence, the archives have not been completely declassified, and the most bitter, "inconvenient" and painful questions to this day remain unanswered:

When did the Great Patriotic War actually end? Why was Berlin not taken in February 1945 and had to be stormed in April? Who actually took the Reichstag and raised the Banner of Victory? Are the huge losses of Soviet tanks thrown into the bloody chaos of street fighting justified, and is it true that more than one tank army burned down in Berlin? Who and how did the Soviet troops liberate in Europe? What is the real price of victory? And who actually won the Second World War?

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"The battle of the Kremlin chimes in Moscow heralded the beginning of the year 1945.

We celebrated this New Year as the year of the coming victory. No one had any doubts that this very year the war would end with the complete defeat of the Nazi army and the complete liberation of the enslaved peoples of Europe. The hour was approaching, which for several years now all Soviet people had been impatiently waiting for, the hour of the entry of our troops into the territory of the invaders.

Marshal V.I. Chuikov

"Let us strive to complete the defeat of the enemy on his own fields." Field Marshal M.I. Kutuzov

#### THE MIRACLE OF VICTORY

In the context of the patriotic upsurge, inflated in connection with the 65th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War, more and more often, and moreover from the highest rostrums, promises and instructions are heard not to allow the rewriting of history. When politicians talk about history, which they consider to be one of the sections of the Agitator's and Propaganda's Handbook, it becomes embarrassing: why shouldn't they show off their knowledge of astrophysics or quantum mechanics?

And once again I want to ask: "Is there anything to rewrite?"

Let's look through the textbook published in 2009 in Moscow. The textbook is written "taking into account the current level of historical science" and is recommended by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of the Russian Federation for students, graduate students and university teachers:

"The war proved the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist in all areas. The moral and political unity of the Soviet people, patriotism, the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, the just goals of the war gave rise to mass heroism at the front, the labor feat of the people in the rear. victory in

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The Great Patriotic War was ensured by the might of the Soviet armed forces, the superiority of Soviet military science and military art over the military science and military art of Germany... The Communist Party was the organizer and inspirer of the victory of the Soviet people, the rank-and-file communists were the political fighters of the combat front and labor LOGO...

The victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War was natural. Its origins lie in the enormous socio-economic gains achieved by the Soviet people during the years of Soviet power. The socialist economic system ensured the power and unprecedented mobility of the Soviet economy."

Let's take off the shelf forty years ago a tome published under the auspices of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the CPSU:

"Of course, there were many accidents during the war, and they to some extent influenced the armed struggle. But the final result of the gigantic fight was due to a number of patterns. The most important of these are the advantages of the economic and political organization of socialist society, its advanced Marxist-Leninist ideology...

During the war years, as in peacetime, our glorious Communist Party was the tried and tested leader of the Soviet people, their inspirer and organizer.

Thus, Khrushchev's six-volume book, together with Zhukovsky's memoirs, remain the ultimate truth, "the most truthful books about the war." Frankly, the "modern level of historical science" is not impressive. But let's stick to the source:

"Our victory means, first of all, that our Soviet social system has won... The war has shown that the Soviet social system is a truly popular system that has grown out of the depths of the people and enjoys their - Xia quite viable and sustainable form of organization of society. The Soviet social system turned out to be more

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more viable than the non-Soviet social system, that the Soviet social system is a better form of social organization than any non-Soviet social system.

Our victory means that our Soviet state system has won... Our victory means, thirdly, that the Soviet Armed Forces won, our Red Army won, that the Red Army heroically withstood all the hardships of the war, utterly defeated the armies of our enemies and emerged victorious from the war ...

The friendship of the peoples of our country withstood all the hardships and trials of the war and was further tempered in the common struggle of all Soviet people against the fascist invaders...

During the years of the Patriotic War, the party appeared before us as the inspirer and organizer of the nationwide struggle against the fascist invaders."

Well, it's worth digging a little deeper than the "modern level", and you will definitely run into the "luminary of all sciences" - either the "Short Course of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" or "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union". This is the sacred thing that is commanded not to be touched by the highest. It is still unpatriotic and even hostile to one's own people to talk about real events and the actual state of affairs. One gets the impression that modern Russia considers itself not only the legal successor of the USSR, but also directly identifies itself with it. It remains only to return to its rightful place the main thing that the communists have been dreaming about for a long time, and today they are already demanding: "The peoples of the USSR owe their world-historic victories to the greatest leader and commander, Generalissimo of the Soviet Union I.V. Stalin."

Meanwhile, Hitler, referring to the four-year plan, was also building "workers' socialism", with a centralized economy, a controlled market, social guarantees and May Day demonstrations. In the Third Reich, the indestructible unity of the nation was achieved, however, half a million citizens of "non-Aryan nationality" had to be outlawed and concentration camps built for them. The party, headed by the greatest leader and general, organized and inspired the struggle for the ideals of National Socialism and "life".

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empty space." Hitler's generals actively practiced the most advanced concepts of military science. There were no "political fighters" in the Wehrmacht, but the resilience and courage of the German soldier are beyond doubt.

However, Germany was still defeated.

This is an occasion to talk about patterns and randomness.

That Hitler ended up breaking his neck is the natural result of any dictator who aims at world domination. But the fact that the Soviet Union was among the winners is nonsense, a miracle, if you like.

The USSR had to lose the war because:

1. Germany had a powerful industry that produced the most modern models of military equipment, highly qualified engineers and workers. By the time the war with the USSR began, the Czechoslovak Skoda factories, the French company Renault, Dutch and Belgian electrical and chemical plants, and the coal mines of Silesia were working for the Third Reich. Neutral Sweden supplied the Germans with steel and non-ferrous metals, neutral Switzerland supplied precision instruments, grateful Finland supplied timber and manganese, and friendly Hungary and Romania supplied oil.

In the Soviet Union, despite the gigantic efforts and colossal funds spent on industrialization, there was an acute "lack of a general technical and industrial culture, which caused the lack of modern scientific developments, the necessary technical experience and a shortage of qualified personnel."

2. Germany had scientific potential. Already during the war, models were developed and partially adopted for service, which the USSR studied and copied throughout the post-war decade: a new generation of tanks and submarines, jet aircraft, cruise, ballistic and anti-aircraft missiles planning aerial bombs. The secret projects of the Nazis still excite the imagination. German engineers already during the war created what Soviet designers copied throughout the post-war decade.

In the "world's first country of socialism" the presence of intelligence

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It was considered a sign of belonging to hostile classes: the ships of philosophers sailed out of the country and the echelons of engineers left, leaning agronomists-saboteurs and spies-designers against the wall. Bourgeois sciences were destroyed and proletarian sciences were created, for example, astrobotany. The inventions of the turbine, sonar, infrared optics, cyclotron, television passed by ...

3. Germany had allies - Italy, Japan, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia, Finland, Spain.

Thanks to the "wise policy of the party", the USSR, having committed aggression against six states, was expelled from the League of Nations, found itself in international isolation and was left alone with the German military machine, having not a single ally or even a country related to it. with sympathy. Don't think about Mongolia: a country. in which foreign troops are quartered, whose entire government was taken to Moscow and shot according to Soviet laws, is called not an ally, but a protectorate.

In London, which proclaimed the destruction of Hitlerism as its goal, it was believed, not without reason, that "every day the Soviet Union acts more and more definitely as an ally of Germany." In response, the Kremlin branded the British as "warmongers" and argued with aplomb that fighting Hitlerism was a senseless and criminal undertaking.

4. Germany had the best army in the world, perfectly armed, trained, mastered the "blitzkrieg", already used to winning. The Red Army was decapitated, deprived of initiative, poorly trained, as a result of liberation campaigns it was in hostile territory and was not morally prepared for a defensive war.

According to all calculations, after a powerful knockout blow, the Red Colossus should have collapsed. Such a blow, to the amazement of Stalin, who planned to fight exclusively on foreign territory, followed on June 22, 1941. The Red Army, having received a directive to "fall upon" the enemy with all its forces and means and destroy it, immediately set about inflicting "crushing blows" in response. Some

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For a time, the Kremlin harbored the illusion that the "invincible and legendary" would quickly kick the enemy out of the sacred Soviet land. Instead, a crushing defeat of the first strategic echelon followed. On July 9, that is, in just 18 days, 12,000 tanks, 4,000 aircraft, 19,000 guns, 770,000 soldiers and commanders were lost. Endless columns of prisoners wandered along the dusty roads, and the "class brothers" did not even think of turning their bayonets against their own government. Stalin, having declared the war of the Patriotic War, and himself the Supreme Commander, tried to direct the military operations by the usual methods: he searched for enemies, shot and shuffled the commanders, assigned commissars to them, tormented them with petty guardianship, declared all those captured as traitors. Nothing helped: Barbarossa was realized even ahead of schedule; The Führer's favorite topic of table talk in those days was plans for the future structure of Great Germany, its organization, principles of government and the riches that would pour into the Reich from the East. In the second half of July, Smolensk fell, in September the Germans blockaded Leningrad and captured Kyiv, in

In October, they broke into the Donbass and Crimea, took Orel and went to Tula. On November 15, the battle for Moscow began. In gigantic "cauldrons" the personnel Red Army finally ceased to exist.

Iosif Vissarionovich seriously thought about the possibility of concluding peace with the Germans like Brest-Litovsk, when the Bolsheviks paid off huge territorial concessions and reparations in order to maintain power. If this happened, it is not known how the course of the Second World War would have turned. Perhaps the first atomic bombs would have fallen not on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but on Hamburg and Bremen.

The USSR was losing the war with Germany, and would have inevitably lost it if it had fought alone. However, having become a victim of Hitler's aggression, the Soviet Union automatically found allies in the person of the Anglo-Americans. As you know, "Britain has no eternal enemies", and eternal interests dictated the need to support a weaker and less dangerous one in the clash of two totalitarian regimes. Serial en

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The communist Churchill immediately extended a helping hand to Stalin, and behind the back of the British stood the resources of the dominions and colonies and the economic power of the United States, which had not yet entered the war, but had already adopted the Lend-Lease law. On July 12, 1941, a Soviet-English agreement was signed on joint actions in the war against Germany. In August, the United States and Great Britain signed the Atlantic Charter, which was joined by the USSR on September 24. "The world's first proletarian state" miraculously became a member of the "anti-Hitler coalition of democratic countries". According to the signed | On October 10, in Moscow, according to the protocol, the Western powers undertook to supply monthly 400 aircraft, 500 tanks, a large number of trucks, metal, high-octane gasoline, steam locomotives, food, gunpowder and much more, without which, as Stalin indicated in correspondence with Churchill, "The Soviet Union will either be defeated ... or lose for a long time the ability to take active actions on the front of the struggle against Hitlerism." Almost immediately, the Supreme Commander began to demand from the newly acquired allies the opening of a second front in Northern France or Scandinavia, and opened the eyes of the Soviet people on November 6: "One of the reasons for the failure of the Red Army is the absence of a second front in Europe against the Nazi troops. ... The situation is now such that our country is waging a war of liberation alone, without any military assistance."

Later, in hindsight, our historians will compose "for students and graduate students": "The victory of the USSR is all the more significant because it was achieved independently, because the proportion of all goods supplied to the USSR by the Allies in World War II was negligible". And then, according to N.S. Khrushchev, in a narrow circle of associates, the Leader "bluntly said that if the United States had not helped us, we would not have won this war: one on one with Nazi Germany, we would not have withstood its onslaught and lost the war."

True, the Fuhrer of the German nation also greatly underestimated the resource capabilities of the enemy and the ability of the communist regime to mobilize. Already in August in Burghley

eleven

did not begin to doubt the possibility of completing the Eastern campaign before winter. On August 11, General Halder made a noteworthy entry in his diary: "The general situation shows more and more clearly that the colossus of Russia, which deliberately prepared for war with all the unrestraint characteristic of totalitarian regimes, was underestimated by us." And Hitler soon realized where he had broken into: "This is nothing but a single factory for the production of weapons at the expense of lowering the living standards of people. Arms factory directed against Europe»

The Soviet Union has always been preparing for war with the "capitalist encirclement". The Soviet political leadership, guided by the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism, wanted it, did everything to start it, and diligently threw firewood into the flaring world fire. for the sake of

In order to say the decisive word in this war, a command system of resource distribution was introduced, collectivization and industrialization were carried out, the "victorious proletariat" received a seven-day working week and was attached to the machine tool from the age of 14, camps were built all over the country and parachute towers, promoted the ideas of internationalism and Shpanov's books. From the loudspeakers it sounded: "If tomorrow there is a war, if tomorrow we go on a campaign." For the sake of the "great goal", tens of thousands of aircraft and tanks, mountains of weapons and military ammunition were produced. The militarization of economic and social life in the USSR reached a degree that Germany did not know at the peak of its military efforts. The terror unleashed in the country was intended to destroy any potential opposition, to eradicate dissent and to accustom the people "to order" (even Hitler eventually recognized the "Stalinist truth" and regretted that he did not shoot half of his generals for preventive purposes). And the low standard of living in the country, declared a "military camp" long before the war, allowed the population to endure all hardships. Stalin and his comrades definitely did not expect one thing - that the Patriotic War would have to be waged.

Under the conditions of war, the totalitarian system ensured the stability of the state in the period of the most difficult trials.

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Military defeats did not lead to a revolution, as happened with tsarist Russia in 1917, the Soviet people "did not expel their government", although, Stalin admitted, they had every right to do so. The Soviet leadership made a very strong strategic move by ordering the relocation of industry to the east. On the one hand, this created the prerequisites for the restoration of mass military production in places where the Nazis did not even dream of going. On the other hand, the evacuation of plants and factories or their destruction (together with mines and power plants) frustrated the German plans for the rapid organization of production on the basis of the occupied regions. Such a grandiose event - the transfer of 1523 industrial enterprises beyond the Urals, huge masses of people who began to produce products right under the open sky and did not have the right to return to their native lands until 1953 - was impossible without the over-centralization of power and the monstrous exploitation of "workers rear, which Hitler could not imagine: he never thought of putting German women at the machines or putting them behind the levers of the tractor.

The army, in any case, its top, unquestioningly obeyed the Supreme Commander. The low level of training was covered by the readiness to fight, regardless of human losses. For those military personnel whose morale was not high enough, the points of order No. 270 and other measures to strengthen discipline were distributed:

"Unrelenting discipline, which no other army could have endured, has turned the disorganized crowd into an unusually powerful weapon of war. Discipline is the main trump card of communism, the driving force of the army. It was also a decisive factor in the achievement of Stalin's enormous political and military successes.

It must be admitted that it was Stalin, who purposefully created this system, who alone could govern with maximum efficiency.

Having defeated the first strategic echelon, the Germans had to fight with the second, then with the third echelon, then

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under the caterpillars of the "panzers" the militia lay down, and "our victory was already completely", but it is not known from where the so-called "Siberian divisions" suddenly appeared. By early December 1941

years, the German offensive on Moscow ran out of steam, the strike groups were exhausted and bled, the plan "Barba-

Rossa collapsed, the Germans had no other plan. The failure of the "blitzkrieg" put Germany before the prospect of a delay

war on two fronts, requiring colossal funds,

material and human resources. Red Army immediately

went over to the counteroffensive and pushed the enemy back from Moscow by 150-300 kilometers, inflicting significant losses in manpower and especially in equipment.

Former confidence began to return to Stalin, and he set the task for the Red Army "to ensure that 1942 becomes the year of the final defeat of the German fascist troops and the liberation of the Soviet land from the Nazi scoundrels." This time, the Soviet command overestimated its own strength and underestimated the strength of the resistance of the enemy troops.

The Wehrmacht held out in the winter campaign. The failures in Russia did not penetrate deeply into the minds of the Germans, also because, in December 1941, the Japanese began to achieve major successes in the Pacific theater of military operations. To celebrate, Hitler and Mussolini also declared war on America, although the "Pact of Steel" did not oblige them to do so. Perhaps the Fuhrer cherished the hope that the Japanese would oppose the USSR as a reciprocal gesture, but they preferred to get off with expressions of gratitude. Nevertheless, Japan's entry into the war provided Germany with great psychological support and was of great military importance. It was believed that the United States would now be distracted by its own problems for a long time and would not be able to provide significant assistance to Great Britain and the Soviet Union, which, in turn, delayed the decision to open a second front. It seemed to the Germans that they still had time for a final solution of the Russian question.

In May 1942, the "Hitler scoundrels" defeated five Soviet armies as part of the preparatory measures.

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in the Crimea and near Kharkov, and on June 28 they launched a general offensive that brought the Soviet Union to the brink of catastrophe. Within a month, the Germans captured the Donbass and Rostov, captured a number of bridgeheads on the left bank of the Don, then Krasnodar and Maykop fell. On August 21, the "edelweiss" of Captain Grotto planted Nazi flags on the top of Elbrus, and on August 23, the 16th Panzer Division of General Hube rolled out onto the banks of the Volga north of Stalingrad.

Under the German occupation were the richest agricultural and industrial regions of the country, more than 70 million people, which threatened the complete collapse of the economy in a matter of months. "If you look back," recalled N.S. Khrushchev, "I will say that when we retreated, I could not imagine how we would be able to get out of this situation." Stalin issued the famous Order No. 227, in which he stated: "We no longer have superiority over the Germans either in human reserves or in grain reserves. To retreat further means to ruin ourselves and, at the same time, our Motherland."

However, Hitler dismantled the Blau plan with his own hands, for which there were both objective and subjective reasons. Most importantly, the Wehrmacht itself was no longer enough to hold the conquered territories. In addition, the idiotic racial ideology of the Nazis did not contribute to the awakening of friendly feelings among the conquered natives, and did not strive for this. Stalin quickly understood this and brilliantly won the ideological war:

"He weakened the press that crushed the church, introduced shoulder straps in the army, thereby reviving pre-revolutionary traditions, abolished the institution of commissars, dissolved the Comintern, and rehabilitated many military leaders who had been arrested earlier. The great commanders of the past - Suvorov, Kutuzov, who until recently were slinged with mud by Stalin himself, returned to the Russian banners. New orders were named after them. And the people rallied, especially since the Germans, with their outrages, murders, violence against the civilian population, destroyed all sorts of

illusions associated with them at the beginning of the war. The Germans saw in front of them a single People who stood up against them.

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Under the slogan of defending the Fatherland, the newly created Red Army began to win battles. The victories at Stalingrad and Kursk, together with additional help from the allies, made it possible to stabilize the war economy. The war rolled to the west.

In 1943, the Axis countries were opposed by two-thirds of the world's population - more than 20 countries with huge raw materials and industrial resources. Of course, the contribution of each of them was different, not as "decisive" as the contribution of the Soviet Union, but they all did a common job. For example, a Brazilian infantry division fought as part of the US 5th Army, Brazil supplied rubber, manganese, nickel, tungsten, technical diamonds to the USA and did not supply them to Germany, and Mexican pilots guarded allied convoys. After the withdrawal of Italy from the war, the defeat in the Battle of the Atlantic and Operation Overlord, the military defeat of the Third Reich became inevitable, the strategic aviation of the allies methodically destroyed German industry and turned the city into ruins.

In 1944, the Red Army completely liberated the territory of the USSR from the invaders, withdrew Finland from the war, captured Romania and Bulgaria, invaded Hungary and Slovakia, went directly to the borders of the Third Reich. The army became victorious, this, in particular, is evidenced by the GKO resolution of October 29, 1944 on the disbandment of barrage detachments due to the fact that "the need for their maintenance has disappeared."

Strictly speaking, by definition and by analogy with 1812, the Patriotic War of the Soviet people is over. The foreign campaign of the Red Army began.

By the end of 1944, the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition had a huge military and economic potential and armed forces, significantly superior to the Wehrmacht.

The Armed Forces of the USSR had 9.4 million people, 244.4 thousand guns and mortars, 35.4 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 43.3 thousand combat aircraft.

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10 front-line formations, 51 combined arms, 6 tank, 10 air armies and 2 air defense fronts of the country — 473 rifle, airborne and cavalry divisions, 21 tank, 12 mechanized corps operated on the front with a length of 2200 kilometers. In the reserve of the Headquarters were the directorates of two fronts, four combined arms and two air armies, four tank and mechanized corps, 20 rifle divisions. Together with the Soviet troops, the Polish, two Romanian, Bulgarian armies, the Czechoslovak army corps fought.

In total, on the Soviet-German front, the Red Army had 6.7 million people, 118 thousand guns and mortars, 12 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns and 22 thousand combat aircraft.

The German command had 8 field armies, 4 tank armies, a task force and 3 air fleets on the Eastern Front. They included 169 divisions (of which 22 were armored and 9 were tank-grenadier divisions) and 20 brigades. Two Hungarian armies also acted together with them. In total, therefore, 3.7 million people, 56.2 thousand guns and mortars, 8.1 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 4 thousand combat aircraft. Over a quarter of the German divisions were in Northern Norway and were blockaded in Courland. Hitler categorically refused to order the evacuation of the Courland grouping: firstly, because of the port of Libava, which the fleet needed to maintain its dominance in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea, and, secondly, the Fuhrer, in his strategic fantasies, intended to use this bridgehead for a new offensive.



In October 1944, according to Army General S.M. Shtemenko, the Soviet General Staff began to develop a plan for the final campaign:

"The end of the struggle on the Soviet-German front was predetermined in our favor, the hour of the final defeat of the enemy approached. We outnumbered the enemy not only in the number of troops, but also in their training and technical equipment. Combat operations were fully supported by the well-coordinated work of the rear; he provided the front with ever-increasing HELP.

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The strategic position of the Soviet troops and the armies of other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition was assessed by us as close to the completion of the encirclement of Germany. In essence, the Soviet army and the Anglo-American forces took up starting positions for a decisive offensive against the vital centers of Germany. Now it was necessary to make the last impetuous onslaught and in a short time finally crush the enemy.

The general idea was to conduct a simultaneous offensive from the Baltic Sea to the Danube with the main attack on the Warsaw-Berlin direction, to complete the liberation of Poland, to capture East Prussia, East Pomerania, to expel German troops from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, to create a gap in the enemy's strategic front, take Berlin, Prague, Vienna, link up with the allies and victoriously end the war in Europe.

On the Western Front, the Allied troops fought along the line from the mouth of the Meuse River to the Swiss border. The expeditionary forces included 5.7 million people, 50 thousand guns and mortars, 16.1 thousand tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, 16.7 thousand combat aircraft. The German troops had 1.9 million men, 45,000 guns and mortars, 3,500 tanks and assault guns, and 2,700 aircraft.

The Anglo-American command was preparing to carry out operations to invade the territory of the Third Reich. The commander-in-chief of the allied forces, General Dwight Eisenhower, planned the offensive in two stages: the first envisaged reaching the Rhine, the second - forcing this river and advancing "into the heart of Germany".

Despite the seeming hopelessness of the situation, Germany did not become easy prey at all, and the Wehrmacht did not turn into a "whipping boy". The country still had a rather powerful industrial base. At the cost of extreme tension, due to the total mobilization and labor of foreign workers, the Germans have so far managed to keep military production at a fairly high level.

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To compensate for the loss of life, in 1944 a contingent of young people born in 1927 was called up for military service and elderly men were mobilized, as well as Volksdeutsches in the occupied countries. As a result, by the beginning of 1945, the German command managed to increase the strength of the armed forces to 9.4 million soldiers and officers, of which 5.4 million were in the active army. It was armed with 110,000 guns and mortars, 13,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, over 7,000 combat aircraft, including jet fighters and bombers. The troops were saturated with automatic and manual anti-tank weapons. In November-December, along with 550 tanks, 1200 assault and anti-tank self-propelled guns left the assembly shops every month. The production of cruise and ballistic missiles continued, with which they continued to terrorize the cities of England. Submarines of a new generation were being prepared to fight on sea lanes.

German troops were combined into 11 army groups, 3 operational groups, 16 field, 6 tank armies and an army group. They consisted of 295 divisions and 30 brigades. The Warmia Reserve, which the Reichsfuehrer SS undertook to lead, and various rear formations had 2.5 million people.

New connections were being formed. Many grenadier and infantry divisions were renamed into people's grenadier divisions "in order to give the development of the ground forces a national socialist spirit." An attempt was made to create large artillery formations by bringing together parts of the RGK artillery into people's artillery corps. Hitler's passion for "grenadiers" and "fusiliers" stemmed from his love for the era and the deeds of King Frederick the Great. The number of SS divisions was increased. By the beginning of 1945, 1.5 million people were in the ranks of the Volkssturm. This "party militia" included able-bodied males under the age of 60. They wore civilian clothes with an armband and were armed, as a rule, with captured rifles.

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It was not possible to equip this mass of people at the expense of the Wehrmacht due to the acute shortage of uniforms, weapons and equipment. The largest division of the Volkssturm was the battalion.

There were no enemy troops on German soil yet, the German army remained combat-ready, the German soldier continued to fight skillfully and stubbornly, and the German people did not doubt the Fuhrer's genius, who "will definitely come up with something", and believed the fables about the "miracle weapon". The reduction of the territory allowed the command to increase the density of troops and organize a long-term resistance. Only a few saw that Germany was heading towards ruin.

Hitler saw a way out in prolonging the armed struggle, hoping for a split in the anti-fascist coalition. He was convinced that the contradictions between the USSR, on the one hand, and the USA and England, on the other, would lead to the collapse of the alliance between them: "The time will come when the tension between the allies will reach such a degree that a break will be inevitable. History shows that all coalitions inevitably break up sooner or later." In fact, the Fuhrer has exhausted his limit of "miracles". Individual representatives of the Nazi elite secretly built bridges to the West, hoping for a separate peace. Reich Minister for Armaments Albert Speer describes the general situation as follows: "A general indifference reigned at the headquarters, which could not be explained only by lethargy, overwork and Hitler's mental influence. Instead of violent clashes, the tension of the past years and months between numerous mutually hostile interests, groups, cliques, fighting for Hitler's goodwill and pushing responsibility for the ever-increasing defeats onto each other, now a quiet disinterest reigned here, already heralding end".

However, the demand for unconditional surrender left the Germans no choice.

In early December, the Fuhrer planned to carry out an offensive operation on the Western Front, in the Ardennes region, which received the code name "Watch on the Rhine". Planned

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The aim was to break through the front in the Monschau-Echternach sector, cross the Meuse River in the Liège and Namur regions, and on the seventh day, having reached Antwerp, cut off the Anglo-American troops in Belgium and Holland. If successful, Hitler expected a significant weakening of the Western powers, which would provide him with the opportunity to transfer large forces to the Eastern Front in order to repel the Russian winter offensive. They hoped in this way to buy time and force the allies to abandon their demands for unconditional surrender. The 6th SS Panzer Army, 5th Panzer and 7th Field Armies of Army Group B took part in the operation. A total of 25 divisions were involved, including 7 tank divisions. The offensive grouping consisted of about 250 thousand people, 900 tanks and self-propelled guns, 860 aircraft and 2617 guns and mortars - frankly, not enough. On December 10, Hitler moved into the Eagle's Nest to personally direct the operation.

"Watch on the Rhine" began at dawn on 16 December. The blow fell on the positions of the 1st American army. Taken by surprise, the American troops retreated, suffering heavy losses. The German grouping broke through the front and in a week advanced to a depth of 90

kilometers, and the advanced tank units were 4 kilometers from the Meuse River. On December 23, flying weather set in, and the Allied aviation eclipsed the sky. From December 22 to 26, the 3rd American Army launched a counterattack on the southern flank of the advancing enemy grouping and connected with units of the 101st Airborne Division surrounded in the Bastogne region. By the end of the month, the advance of German troops on the Meuse was stopped.

For the Chief of the General Staff of the OKH, Heinz Guderian, already on December 24 it was clear "that the offensive had completely failed. It was necessary to immediately switch all our efforts to the east, if it was not already too late. Hitler was still trying to improvise by changing the direction of the blow, but there was clearly not enough strength to turn the situation in his favor.

It was the turn of the Red Army.

TO BERLIN! FIRST TRY

In the summer of 1944, having defeated the strategic enemy groupings in Belarus and the western regions of Ukraine, the troops of Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky and Marshal I.S. Koneva went to the Vistula and captured bridgeheads on its western bank. The 1st Belorussian Front entrenched itself on the Magnuszewski and Pulawy, and the 1st Ukrainian Front on the Sandomierz bridgehead.

Preparations for a new grandiose operation, which was supposed to open a direct road "to the lair of the fascist beast," began at the end of October. Having received tentative considerations from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the headquarters of the fronts began planning the last offensive. A special meeting with the commanders, as was the practice before, was not held: the marshals were summoned separately to Moscow, where all the details were discussed, and Stalin personally set the task for them.

Troops, equipment, ammunition, fuel poured into the central sector of the Soviet-German front in a full-flowing stream ...

In October-December, from the Stavka reserve, from the Baltic States, Hungary, Karelia, eight combined arms and three tank armies, five aviation corps, two breakthrough artillery corps, a large number of separate artillery, aviation, tank, self-propelled artillery units.

In one of the wagons, together with his artillery regiment, Sergeant N.N. Nikulin: "It was

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messy move. The army traveled in dozens of echelons. Tankers, infantrymen, artillerymen. On the way, the soldiers exchanged junk for moonshine among the population, and drunken echelons with songs, whooping, sometimes with shooting, rolled across the territory of Poland to the west. At one station, the authorities tried to ban the sale of moonshine. The tankers who drove up turned the turret of the tank and fired an anti-tank blank into the commandant's house between the floors. They said that the boss ran away wearing what his mother gave birth to. After that, everything went on as before. We celebrated the New Year in a freight car at the Lida station. Senior Lieutenant Kosinov gloomily smashed his watch with his fist, while the rest danced around the red-hot stove and sang in bad voices drunk songs".

Personnel changes followed. On November 16, 1944, Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal G.K. Zhukov (order of the Headquarters No. 220263 dated 11/12/45). Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky moved to the 2nd Belorussian Front and replaced General of the Army G.F. Zakharov. The latter was supposed to be made Zhukov's deputy, but in the end, with a demotion, he was sent to Hungary to command the 4th Guards Army.

"It was already evening," recalls K.K. Rokossovsky. - We had just gathered in the dining room to have dinner, when the duty officer reported that the Headquarters was calling me to the HF. The apparatus had a Supreme Commander. He said that I was appointed commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front. It was so unexpected that I immediately asked him in the heat of the moment:

"Why such a disgrace that they are transferring me from the main direction to a secondary sector?"

Stalin replied that I was mistaken: the section to which I was being transferred was included in the general western direction, on which the troops of three fronts would operate - the 2nd Belorussian, 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian; The success of this decisive operation will depend on the close interaction of the three fronts, therefore, the Stavka paid special attention to the selection of commanders.  
attention...

Stalin in a warm tone announced that the 2nd Belorussian

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The front is entrusted with a very responsible task, the front will be strengthened with additional forces and means.

"If you and Konev do not advance, then Zhukov will not advance anywhere either," concluded the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Providing assistance to Zhukov is undoubtedly an important matter, but every military man understood that it was the 1st Belorussian Front "that would advance in the main direction and that the actions of the neighbors, for all the significance of the tasks being solved, would be linked with the actions of the front, solving the main task. - chu. And therefore, the resentment of Rokossovsky, who immediately left for a new place of service without a formal transfer of affairs, without waiting for a successor, is understandable: for political reasons, Konstantin Konstantinovich was not allowed to liberate Warsaw, for the same reasons he was deprived of the main military leadership prize - the capture of the enemy capital. True, Georgy Konstantinovich, according to the testimony of his personal driver A.N. Buchin, he was in no hurry to go to the front headquarters. He went to Chuikov's army and washed his honorary appointment for three days. Only on the morning of November 19, Zhukov tumbled into his armored Mercedes, gently hugged his personal driver and, "slurring the words, said: "Sashka, I love you. If anything, send them to..." I was taken aback. He just murmured: "Comrade Marshal, don't interfere, we'll land in a ditch!" Zhukov removed his hand and dozed all the way to headquarters.

The change of leadership in principle is a painful process. Zhukov was well known in the Red Army, and the headquarters of the 1st Belorussian Front fearfully awaited the arrival of a new commander. |

"K.K. Rokossovsky was loved by his immediate subordinates, soldiers, and officers of the units, - recalls the head of the rear of the front, General N.A. Antipenko. - More than once I heard the question: what was the reason for such a general good attitude towards Rokossovsky?

I do not pretend to be an impartial biographer and openly admit that I myself am attached to this man, with whom I have been connected by almost three years of joint work at the front and who, with his personal charm, is always

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by his polite and courteous treatment, constant readiness to help in difficult times, he was able to arouse in each subordinate a desire to better fulfill his order and not let his commander down in anything ... That is why the leadership of the front was so united and soldered: each of us sincerely valued the authority of his commander. Rokossovsky was not feared at the front, he was loved. And that is why his instruction was perceived as an order, which  
cannot be fulfilled.

Organizing the execution of Rokossovsky's orders, I resorted least of all in relations with subordinates to the formula "the commander ordered." There was no need for this. It was enough to say that the commander hopes for the initiative and high organization of the rear...

Moreover, they spoke of Zhukov as a man with a tough character and a tough temper ... "

Member of the Military Council, General K.F. Telegin, paying tribute to the "outstanding qualities of a truly talented commander", noted that the style of work of the front-line administration under Zhukov "has not changed for the better":

"K.K. Rokossovsky worked in a team and with a team. With this method of working out tasks and managing combat operations, everyone felt like an active and direct participant in the solution ...

G.K. Zhukov was a supporter of a somewhat different line. In the team, in the closest assistants, he saw, first of all, the executors of his decisions, often made in loneliness and made in solitude. Attempts to discuss his decisions, even at the stage of their preparation, he perceived extremely wary, stubbornly withdrew into himself and, if it was difficult to challenge the arguments of the boss who objected in the conversation, he sometimes parried with a disarming phrase:

"I have already reported to the Supreme Commander, and he has approved my considerations!"

It goes without saying that after such a statement, the objections lost their meaning.

(However, in vain Konstantin Fedorovich worried. Zhukov quickly found a common language with his party over

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spectator, and they lived soul to soul. The friendship was especially strengthened when two high-ranking marauders broke into the vaults of the German Reichsbank.)

Well, if only someone remembered Zhukov with a human kind word!

Let's open the memoirs of Army General P.I. Batov, one of the best army commanders of that war. He had the most unforgettable impressions from the meeting with the "talented commander": "During my long service in the army, I have never experienced such humiliation..."

Army General G.I. Khetagurov, an ardent and fearless Ossetian who dared to send the commander away along with his "outstanding qualities" in response to Zhukovsky's swearing, for which he was demoted from the post of chief of staff of the 1st Guards Army to the level of division commander, states: "Exorbitant rude, to the point of insulting human feelings.

And ordinary signalman Nikolai Lazarenko: "The ceremonial portrait of the commander did not always correspond to the realities of military reality. Most of all, our radio operators, who worked at the very "top", were afraid not of Nazi bullets and shrapnel, but of their own commander. The fact is that Zhukov was a man of mood and therefore he was very cool for reprisal ...

During the war, the legendary commander gave about 40% of his radio operators to the tribunal. And this is tantamount to the fact that he would have shot them with his own hands. The "fault" of these ordinary signalers, as a rule, was that they could not immediately establish a connection. But the connection could be absent not only for technical reasons. The person on the other side of the wire could just be killed. However, Zhukov was not interested in such "little things" at all. He demanded immediate contact, and his absence was perceived only as a failure to comply with the order - and nothing else. Hence the pseudo-legal side of his cruelty - a tribunal for failure to comply with an order in wartime. However, the matter often did not reach the court-martial. Frenzied

due to the lack of communication, a war hero could personally shoot an innocent soldier."

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And many more testimonies about how they shuddered on the 1st Belorussky, having heard about Zhukovsky coolness and cruelty.

In the memoirs, opinions are censored, but even in the most smoothed form they express what Marshal S.K. directly stated after the war. Timoshenko: "I know Zhukov well from a long joint service and I must frankly say that the tendency to unlimited power and a sense of personal infallibility are in his blood."

A comprehensive description of Zhukov was given by Ekaterina Katukova: "Georgy Konstantinovich was endowed with enormous, unlimited power. Few survive this test and remain human. As soon as power comes to a person, for some reason he completely forgets who he was before.

I think that envy, ambition, greed, ambition, petty revenge are not at all compatible with the military profession. In any case, the blind use of power betrays weakness.

A person vested with state power has no right to be tired, irritable, bored. He must cherish his independence, as he obeys only the law. Georgy Konstantinovich, on the other hand, was tired, in a hurry, and irritated. But what about K.K. Rokossovsky, A.I. Antonov, V.M. Vasilevsky, M.E. Katukov? After all, they were also endowed with power, they also bore the hardships of the war, but they were completely different people, not at all like G.K. Zhukov.

Georgy Konstantinovich got used to the power entrusted to him by law, and no longer feared or respected anyone. One only I.V. Stalin could stop him. This was the mistake of Georgy Konstantinovich, for which he later paid dearly.

Gradually G.K. Zhukov lost himself, got confused. There is a lot of glory, but I want even more.

What is most necessary for a commander as a person in whose hands are the lives of hundreds, thousands of people? He is entrusted with these lives, and he is responsible for them before the country, before the future, before History. How not to bend, how to stand under such a burden? It is necessary to be persistent, to give up a lot And the main condition is to defeat yourself. Power must be exercised carefully, treated better than

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they deserve, and to understand that all good things are created by the people.

Nobody argues about the strong-willed qualities and abilities of Marshal G.K. Zhukov. You can't take that away from him. The talent was great, but Georgy Konstantinovich's character and upbringing left much to be desired. If he wanted to achieve something, he went ahead.

G.K. Zhukov was short, stocky, overweight. Facial features are sharp and stern. He spoke abruptly and rarely laughed. He cursed subtly - artistically (and you can't take that away from him either). The marshal believed that such treatment of subordinates raised his authority. Georgy Konstantinovich was cruel and easily fell into a state of anger. And anger, as you know, is a bad adviser. It is not for nothing that people say: nothing can be started in anger, and it is useful for an irritated person to count to a hundred before speaking, deciding or acting. Unfortunately, Marshal Zhukov did not do this and often made decisions in anger that were not always fair.

If the surname Zhukov is changed to the abstract Ivanov, then anyone familiar with such a characterization will say that Ivanov is a narcissistic boor, a cruel tyrant and not a very smart person. It is hard to believe that all these qualities were combined with a "great talent".

In order to fully feel his own greatness, Zhukov preferred the society of sycophants, who made up his inner circle: "Georgy Konstantinovich built his relations with people depending on whether they respect him or not. He liked the unquestioning execution of orders. If this was not the case, he became picky and treated the disobedient with contempt. G.K. Zhukov liked to shout, without understanding, at the first one that caught his eye and under his arm. Politeness and patience did not differ. Everyone tried to get away from the wrath of G.K. Zhukov. He was rarely pleased, almost always harsh and rude... When Marshal Zhukov arrived, sycophants look into the eyes and run ahead - just to lick their hands and wag their tails.

Dancer and comedian Boris Sichkin repeatedly serve

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val - as it was then called - marshal banquets: "In the residence of the marshal, the attendants consisted of males in the rank of no lower than major general. They were frank lackeys: they cleaned the marshal's boots, set the table and cleared the table. In a word, they looked like helpful dogs. When they listened to the orders of the marshal, they bent to the floor. It was disgusting to look at these people who had lost all respect for themselves. I am sure that if they had behaved with dignity, the marshal would have respected them."

But that's just the point, that Georgy Konstantinovich was incapable of respecting anyone.

Personnel changes, except, of course, Zhukov himself, who arranged a banquet on this occasion with songs and dances, were delighted, perhaps, only at the headquarters of the 2nd Belorussian

front.

At the same time, Stalin abolished the institution of representatives of the Headquarters of the All-Union Command of the Command, entrusting the task of coordinating the actions of the fronts in the Berlin direction to himself, in the Baltics - to Marshal A.S. Vasilevsky, in Czechoslovakia and Hungary - to Marshal S.K. Timoshenko.

On November 28 and 25, directives were issued from Moscow to conduct offensive operations by the commander of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, on November 30 - to the commander of the 2nd Belorussian fronts. There was a lot of work to do, no firm dates for the start of operations were named by the Supreme Commander, however, according to the testimony of General N.A. Antipenko and PMC of the 5th shock army of General F.E. Bokov, all preparations had to be completed no later than January 10, 1945.

## VISLA-ODER OPERATION

In accordance with the general plan of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front (47th, 61st, 3rd, 5th shock, 8th guards, 69th, 33rd combined arms, 2nd and 1st Guards Tank, 16th Air Army, 1st Army of the Polish Army, 11th and

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9th tank, 2nd and 7th guards cavalry corps - total 68 rifle and 6 cavalry divisions, 5 tank and 2 mechanized corps, 5 separate tank, 2 self-propelled artillery, 1 cavalry brigade, 2 fortified areas - and much more, like the 4th and 6th artillery corps and six separate breakthrough artillery divisions, assault engineer-sapper brigades, separate flamethrower battalions, etc.) smash the Warsaw-Radom grouping of the enemy and, having advanced by 150-180

kilometers in depth, not later than the 11th-12th day of the offensive, capture the Petruwek, Zhikhlin, Lodz line. In the future, it was necessary to develop success in the general direction of Poznan.

Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front (6th, 13th, 52nd, 5th Guards, 60th, 59th, 3rd Guards, 21st Combined Arms, 4th and 3rd Guards Tank, 2nd Air Army, 25th, 31st, 4th Guards Tank Corps, 7th Guards Mechanized Corps, 1st Guards Cavalry Corps - 66 rifle, 3 cavalry divisions, 6 tank and 3 mechanized corps, 3 separate tank and 3 self-propelled artillery brigades, 1 fortified area, 7th and 10th artillery corps, 5 breakthrough artillery divisions) were ordered, in cooperation with the Belorussian Front, to defeat the Kielce-Radom grouping of the enemy and, having overcome 120-150 kilometers, on the 10th-11th day of the operation, capture the Peotrkow, Czystochowa, and Bochnia lines; in the future, to advance in the general direction towards Breslau.

Marshal Zhukov was going to destroy the enemy defenses in three directions. It was planned to deliver the main blow to Kutno, Poznan from the Magnushevsky bridgehead (45 kilometers along the front and 18 kilometers in depth). Here, the 61st, 5th shock and 8th guards armies were supposed to break through the enemy positions on the 1st corps. To build up efforts, the 3rd shock army, which was in the second echelon of the front, was intended.

The second blow was planned to be delivered from the Puławy parade ground

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darma (30 kilometers along the front and 10 kilometers in depth) in the direction of Radom, Lodz. The 69th and 33rd armies, reinforced by the 11th 9th tank corps, broke through the enemy defenses on a 13-kilometer sector. On the 12th day of the operation, the 69th Army, Colonel General V.Ya. Kolpakchi was supposed to capture the city of Lodz and reach the Zgierz-Pabianice line. 33rd Army Colonel General V.D. Tsvetaeva with her main forces aimed at Shidlovets in order to, in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, encircle and destroy the Ostrovets-Opatovskaya enemy grouping. On the third day of the operation, it was planned to bring the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps into action.

The destruction of the Warsaw grouping was assigned to three combined arms and one tank armies. 47th Army of Major General F.I. Perkhorovicha received the task of going on the offensive on the second day of the operation, breaking through the German defenses on a 4-kilometer sector north of Warsaw, eliminating the enemy bridgehead between the Vistula and the Western Bug, forcing the Vistula southeast of Modlin and developing an offensive on Leszno in bypassing the capital of Poland from the northwest. Troops of the 61st Army, Colonel General P.A. Belov and the 2nd Guards Tank Army, Colonel General S.I. Bogdanov rounded Warsaw from the southwest and west. The task of directly liberating the city was entrusted to the 1st Army of the Polish Army - according to the plan, it went on the offensive on the fourth day, using the success of the Soviets.

"In addition, the left-flank 70th Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front, which was tasked with striking around Modlin and being ready to force the Vistula, was to take part in the defeat of the Warsaw grouping.

Marshal Konev decided to deliver one powerful blow from the Sanlomis bridgehead (70 kilometers along the front and 50 kilometers in depth) in the direction of Khmilnik, Radomsko. The breakthrough of the defense was planned to be carried out in one sector with a width of 39 kilometers by the troops of the 13th, 52nd, 5th Guards armies. The 4th Guards and 31st Tank Corps were attached to the latter. For development of the offensive was planned

on the first day, lead the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies into battle with the task of reaching the Pilica River by the end of the third day of the operation and capturing the crossings on it. Ivan Stepanovich had his own opinion on the issue of the use of tank troops and "clean breakthroughs" did not



admitted in principle: "To have such equipment and not to use the full force of its impact, fire and maneuver, but to plan breakthroughs as it was done in the First World War, keeping the tanks inactive, while the infantry gnawed through the enemy's defenses on the through - always seemed to me erroneous. Indeed, the Soviet tank armies of the "homogeneous composition" of the 1944 model represented an impressive force: "Compared to the tank armies of the mixed composition, the armies of the homogeneous composition had greater striking power and firepower, as well as mobility due to the lack of non-motorized connections. Opportunities to support combat operations have also increased significantly. The presence of separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigades made it possible to have a strong mobile tank reserve or, if necessary, to quickly detach a forward detachment. Combat formations and units of the army, armed with tanks, self-propelled artillery mounts, artillery, including anti-aircraft and artillery, small arms and machine guns, could inflict defeat on large enemy tank groups up to a tank corps. For example, in the 3rd Guards Tank Army, commanded by Colonel General P.S. Rybalko, included the 6th and 7th Guards Tank Corps, the 9th Mechanized Corps, the 199th Light Artillery Brigade, the 57th Guards Separate Heavy Tank Regiment, the 16th Self-Propelled Artillery Brigade, the 50th Separate Motorcycle Regiment, the 19th Motorized Engineering Brigade, the 91st Guards Mortar Regiment, the 77th Motor Transport Regiment and other units. For the period of the operation, the army was assigned artillery battalions of the 145th and 194th cannon brigades of the RGK, the 90th tank engineer regiment, the 207th separate motorized engineer battalion, the 79th assault engineer-sapper battalion and a platoon of mine detector dogs. In total, the army had 55,600 people

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century of personnel, 640 brand new T-34/85 tanks, 22 minesweepers based on T-34/76, 21 IS-2 tanks, 63 ISU-122 heavy self-propelled guns, 63 medium SU-85, 63 light SU-76, 49 light SU-57-I, 60 M-17 self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, 20 152 mm howitzer guns, 20 BS-3 100-mm guns, 222 ZIS-3 three-inch guns, 84 ZIS- 2 caliber 57 mm, 48 M-13 rocket launchers, 364 regimental and battalion mortars, 79 anti-aircraft guns and 161 DShK anti-aircraft machine guns, 5496 trucks, cars and special vehicles.

The basis of the striking power of the 4th Panzer Army, Colonel General D.D. Lelyushenko consisted of two corps - the 10th Guards Tank and 6th Guards Mechanized, plus the 93rd separate tank, 22nd self-propelled artillery brigades and 3 separate tank and 2 self-propelled artillery regiments, because there were combat vehicles slightly less - 750 units.

Ensuring the right flank of the strike force of the 1st Ukrainian Front was entrusted to the 6th Army, formed for the third time, Lieutenant General V.A. Gluzdovsky, reinforced by the 42nd Motorized Engineering Brigade, and the 3rd Guards Army, Colonel General V.N. Gordov with the 25th Tank Corps attached to it. The left flank was covered by the troops of the 60th Army, Colonel-General P.A. Kurochkin, who received the task of breaking through the defense with the main forces in a section 3 kilometers wide and advancing on Krakow along the left bank of the Vistula. The 59th Army, Lieutenant General I.T. It was planned to bring Korovnikov into battle from the line of the Nida River on the second day of the operation. In cooperation with the 60th Army and the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front, she was supposed to liberate Krakow. Also in the second echelon was the 21st Army of Colonel General D.N. Gusev, transferred from the 3rd Belorussian Front and intended for the development of the offensive in the direction of Breslau. In reserve

The 1st Guards Cavalry and 7th Guards Mechanized Corps remained on the front.

Thus, the commanders intended powerful

to crack open the enemy's defenses to the full depth with blows, cut his forces into separate groups and destroy them piece by piece. Tank armies and mobile groups, "destroying the retreating enemy and suitable reserves", had to preempt the Germans by rapid advance and prevent them from occupying the rear defensive lines (which could lead to protracted and bloody battles). The air armies, with massed assault and bomber strikes, were supposed to assist ground troops in breaking through enemy defenses, ensuring the entry of tank armies and corps, supporting their operations in the operational depth, as well as destroying enemy reserves and retreating troops. The Soviet advantage in the number of aircraft was tenfold. As part of the 16th Air Army, Colonel General S.I. Rudenko included 6 aviation corps, 14 separate divisions and regiments. They were armed with 2,459 aircraft, including 1,116 fighters, 504 bombers, and 710 attack aircraft. In addition, the 1st Army of the Polish Army was supported by the 4th mixed air division, which had 90 aircraft. In the air army, Colonel General S.A. Krasovsky, the number of combat vehicles was increased to 2588.

Both plans were approved by Stavka on December 29, 1944. Personally, Konev was instructed, firstly, on the need to avoid protracted battles in the Upper Silesian industrial region in order to prevent the destruction of numerous factories and mines that were to go to Poland, and secondly, on what to introduce tank armies into a breakthrough on the first day of the offensive are still "not necessary" ...

By the beginning of the offensive, the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts had 2.2 million people (moreover, in the brief history of the Second World War it is noted that the number of troops is indicated "excluding rear units and institutions"), 33,500 guns and mortars, over 7,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, 5,000 combat aircraft. Zhukov and Konev gathered under their command a third of the personnel of the active army, a third of artillery and aviation, more than half of the tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, in general, as one of the marshals put it, "the power was great."

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What could Colonel General Josef Harpe, who commanded Army Group A, which held the 700-kilometer line from the mouth of the Western Bug River to the city of Jaslo, oppose to this power?

During a four-month operational pause, the Germans prepared five field defensive lines with a total depth of 150-300 kilometers, covering the approaches to the long-term defensive strip built before the war on the western bank of the Oder River - the "D" line.

The first line of defense - the main defensive line - ran along the western bank of the Vistula and consisted of two or three lines of trenches equipped with a large number of machine-gun, mortar and artillery positions, observation posts and shelters. The main forces of the defending troops were concentrated in the second trench, 2-3 kilometers away from the first. The point was that in the event of the start of a Soviet offensive along the lines of communication, to withdraw the infantry from under the blow of artillery and to accept the battle precisely in the second trench. In accordance with this, the bulk of the engineering obstacles were concentrated between the first and second trenches, and often the bottom and parapet of the first trench were mined in advance.

The second line of defense, which was to be occupied by reserves, was located 15-20 kilometers from the front line and consisted of two or three lines of continuous trenches and strong points. A feature of the rear lines was the presence of anti-tank ditches located in the depths of the defense behind the trenches.

This novelty was especially noted by the Soviet command:

"The principle of creating an anti-tank ditch not in front of the front line, but in the depths of the defensive zone is encountered for the first time. As you know, the purpose of the anti-tank ditch before

The front line was to prevent the advancing tanks from entering the defensive zone and destroy them in front of the front line. The Germans, apparently, took into account the experience that the defender very rarely succeeds in achieving this: our tankers usually, with the help of sappers and infantry, made passages through anti-tank ditches, overcame them without great losses and broke into

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into the enemy's defensive line. The transfer of the anti-tank ditch to the depth of the defense conceals the expectation that, having cut off the infantry following it from the tanks of the advancing infantry, destroy the tanks in the depths of the first defensive line, not letting them go further than the anti-tank ditch.

To increase the stability of the defense, water barriers were widely used - the rivers Vistula, Bzura, Ravka, Radomka, Nida, Pilica, Warta, Obra and others. The system of lines included cities prepared for a long defense, such as Modlin, Warsaw, Radom, Kielce, Krakow, Lodz, Bydgoszcz, Poznan, which were powerful strongholds and centers of resistance. The German command pinned special hopes on the Pomeranian Wall and the Meseritz fortified area, stretching along the Polish-German border.

The Germans built enough different lines, lanes and ramparts, only one problem could not be solved - there were no soldiers in the fortifications. The dispersal of troops to the West to carry out the Ardennes operation and to defend Hungary, where the 4th SS Panzer Corps left from Warsaw, led to a significant weakening of the central sector of the Soviet-German front.

Army Group A included the 9th, 4th Panzer and 17th Armies, which included 30 divisions (including security divisions), 2 brigades and up to 50 separate battalions that made up garrisons in the cities of Poland, - all together 400 thousand soldiers and officers, about 5000 guns and mortars, 870 tanks and assault guns, 364 combat aircraft of the 6th Air Fleet (including 150 fighters and 100 reconnaissance aircraft). There was also the Heinrici army group, but the 4th Ukrainian Front was by no means inactive against it.

Of course, the Germans blocked the bridgeheads captured by the Soviet troops especially tightly. Whereas, on average, in the entire zone of Army Group A, an infantry division defended on a front of 15-20 kilometers, along the perimeter of the bridgeheads the density increased to one infantry division per 10 kilometers of front.

19 divisions acted against the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

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visions from the 4th tank and 17th field armies (257 thousand people, 540 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2700 guns and mortars), and ten of them "guarded" the Sandomierz bridgehead. The first line of defense was occupied by the 68th, 72nd, 88th, 168th, 291st, 304th, 342nd Infantry Divisions. The number of personnel in them reached 6-8 thousand people. Behind the main defensive line were operational reserves — the 24th Panzer Corps, which included the 16th, 17th Panzer, and 20th Panzer Grenadier Divisions — 374 tanks and assault guns. In the depths were the 602nd and 603rd security divisions, reserve regiments and separate battalions. Similarly, battle formations were built in the zone of the 9th Army of the General of the Panzer Troops, Baron von Lutwitz, which was supposed to stop and bleed the advance of the Belorussian Front. The 40th tank corps was in reserve there - the 25th, 19th tank, 10th tank-grenadier divisions.

The Soviet command intended to crush the German defense with an artillery strike of unprecedented power, massive use of armored vehicles, aircraft and engineering troops. In the breakthrough sectors of the 1st Belorussian Front, the density of artillery was increased to 300-310 barrels per kilometer, on the 1st Ukrainian - 230-250 guns and mortars (not counting tank and direct-fire guns). It was decided to shorten the artillery preparation in time, but plan it in such a way as to suppress the entire tactical defense zone of the enemy and cover his nearest reserves. In the 1st Belorussian Front, a half-hour fire raid was envisaged before the attack of the advanced battalions, and then supporting them with a barrage of fire. If

forward battalions will not reach the intended goal, a 70-minute artillery preparation was supposed. In the 1st Ukrainian Front, it was planned to last 107 minutes. 45 minutes before its end, the actions of the attack demonstration platoons were planned, and 15 minutes later the last fire raid followed.

For direct support of rifle formations, G.K. Zhukov singled out 1,488 out of 3,712 tanks and self-propelled guns (the 8th Guards Army alone had

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7 self-propelled and 5 tank regiments), I.S. Konev - 820 armored units out of 3648 available. In addition, there were from 13 to 17 engineering companies per kilometer of breakthrough.

Against each German division, Marshal Konev fielded an army with a pair of tank corps built in two, at and three echelons. For example, the 52nd Army, Colonel General K.A. Koroteev (48th, 73rd, 78th rifle corps), reinforced by a breakthrough artillery corps (these are two artillery divisions, about 1000 guns, mortars and rocket artillery launchers), anti-tank and self-propelled artillery brigades, separate tank regiments, assault and flamethrower battalions of the 23rd motorized engineer brigade, opposed the 68th infantry division, whose forces were estimated at 8 thousand people with 120 guns.

During the preparation of the operation, the opposing enemy grouping and the nature of the engineering equipment of its defense were carefully studied, the units were re-equipped with people and military equipment, the combat skills of the troops and staffs were improved, the engineering equipment of bridgeheads was carried out for the deployment of strike groups on them, stocks of materiel were accumulated. .

Gone are the days when "Ivans" went into battle without reconnaissance, and orders for the offensive were given without knowledge of the situation and regardless of the intentions of the enemy.

Hundreds of observers studied the front line around the clock, spotted defensive objects, the movements of German troops, recorded the slightest changes in the landscape. the same." Commanders and commanders of all levels, discarding doctrinaire ideas about "high operational art" and putting on soldier's tunics, examined the front line on their belly, conducting reconnaissance. Reconnaissance groups left for the German rear and were thrown through the air. Night searches, ambushes, eavesdropping, and reconnaissance in force were widely used. But the most reliable information was provided by aerial photography.

"Strongly holding air supremacy," writes S.I. Rudenko, — we conducted constant and purposeful reconnaissance.

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None of the operations before this had been staged in such a way, I would say, fundamentally... Methodically, kilometer by kilometer, the crew photographed the territory where offensive actions were to be carried out. Suffice it to say that the film captured an area of 109,200 square kilometers. We managed to photograph enemy positions three times in plan to a depth of 4-8 kilometers. Around Magnushev and Pulava, trenches and fortifications were recorded four times, and in these main directions for us, the survey was carried out to a depth of 25-40 kilometers. All this made it possible to open a number of intermediate defensive lines and six powerful anti-tank ditches with a length of 20 to 60 kilometers."

At the headquarters of the fronts and armies, games on cards were held, in corps and divisions - training camps with commanders of units and subunits, in units - tactical exercises with live firing. The assault battalions and forward detachments were especially carefully prepared.

The engineering troops did a great job of building roads and columns, equipping the starting areas and crossings across the Vistula. At the Sandomierz bridgehead, 1,500 kilometers of trenches and communication passages were dug, 1,160 command and observation posts were built, 11,000 artillery and mortar positions were prepared, more than 2,000 kilometers of roads were laid anew and put in order for then, so that by the beginning of the offensive, each division and each tank brigade had two roads. In the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front, sappers built 13 bridges across the Vistula and organized three ferry crossings with a large carrying capacity, 13 bridges were built on the 1st Belorussky. To repel possible enemy counterattacks, mobile obstacle detachments and groups of tank destroyers were created.

Truly titanic labor was required for the accumulation of a fantastic amount of material reserves. One ammunition of the three-corps tank army weighed 2385 tons, one refueling - 985 tons, daily food supply - 100 tons. Ammunition front "pulled" on

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40,000 tons, and one daily "ration" of fodder and rations is about 5,000 tons. Before the operation, two fronts accumulated 3-4 rounds of shells and mines of all calibers (about 9 million rounds), 4-5 refuelings of gasoline and diesel fuel, 9-14 refuelings of aviation fuel, food - for 30- 50 days. 133,000 wagons with troops and materiel were brought along the railways, which had to be changed from the European to the Union gauge in the main directions. The rear services had to unload all this, transport it to the initial areas, store it, bury it in the ground, and mask it.

Secrecy, disguise and misinformation of the enemy regarding their forces and intentions were given paramount importance. Movements were carried out only at night, by morning everything died down. Fir trees were tied to tanks and vehicles, covering their tracks in the snow. All units were provided with camouflage winter nets. On the 1st Ukrainian Front, 240 kilometers of vertical masks up to 4 meters high were installed to cover their positions and communications from enemy eyes.

The observance of the "iron regime of camouflage" by the troops on the routes of movement and in the areas of concentration was monitored by specially assigned aircraft. Each of them was allocated a strip, which the crew looked through from the air two or three times during the day from high and low altitudes and "immediately reported to the front headquarters about what, where and when they found it." Over the forward positions, the music of Blanter and Dunayevsky blared, broadcast by loud-speaking radio installations, "amusing the fighters" and drowning out the engines in the rear. In some areas, sound installations, on the contrary, imitated the noise of tank engines. In order to mislead the Germans, hundreds of plywood tanks, guns and vehicles were made, dozens of deceptive airfields were equipped with models of aircraft and maintenance equipment, false radio stations were operating and kept silent, completely natural minefields were laid, special batteries made regular fire attacks.

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you, demonstrating the immutability of the artillery group. In some areas, sappers built a second defensive floor. Memos containing instructions on the construction of defensive structures were sent to the troops.

3,522 anti-aircraft guns protected the crossings and bridgeheads from enemy bombing and aerial reconnaissance. In addition, the "clear sky" over the Magnushevsky bridgehead was provided by the 3rd Fighter Air Corps, and over the Pulavsky one by the 283rd Fighter Air Division, guided by the Redut radar stations: "All signals about the appearance of enemy aircraft, received from the main radio of the VNOS post of the air army, the operational duty officer transmitted

connections. Interaction of air defense and aviation assets was organized over bridgeheads and the most important areas. The measures taken led to the fact that enemy aircraft rarely managed to break into the location of our troops.

In a word, quoting the enemy general, "the Russians were preparing for their last major offensive with exceptional thoroughness and without any haste," sensibly and, one might say, tastefully. The Germans could do nothing to stop them in this.

Both the unprecedented scope of preparations and the transfer of fronts under Stalin's personal leadership are explained by the fact that Berlin was the ultimate goal of the operation. According to Army General S.M. Shtemenko: "It was assumed that this could be achieved within 45 days of offensive operations to a depth of 600-700 kilometers in two successive efforts (stages) without operational nauzes." That is why they "pushed" Rokossovsky, because it was not a Pole who should have taken the capital of the Third Reich, categorically not a Pole (not for the first and not the last time in the career of the most talented Soviet commander, "Count Fifth" played a cruel joke ), but a natural hare, deputy of the brilliant Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

According to the master plan, the war with Germany was to end in early March. Isn't it strange that we still don't know the code name for the Berlin Strategic Offensive Operation?

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It is high time to note here that there was no coordination between the actions of the Red Army and the Anglo-American troops in Europe. Things got to the point that in November 1944 in Yugoslavia, American planes enthusiastically stormed Soviet columns and airfields, and Yaks fought serious air battles with Lightnings. In connection with this incident, Churchill, in a message to Stalin dated December 2, proposed "to establish a reasonable and comradely connection between our front headquarters."

Reflecting the German offensive in the Ardennes, which surprised them a lot, the allies quite naturally and not for the first time were interested in what "Uncle Joe" was going to do in 1945? Calm reigned on the Eastern Front for four months, and no information was received from Moscow, despite frequent requests. General Eisenhower, in developing his plan for the invasion of Germany, repeatedly stressed the need to ensure the interconnection of the actions of all European fronts. In particular, on December 21, 1944, he wrote: "If ... the Russians intend to launch a decisive offensive in this or next month, the knowledge of this fact is of exceptional importance to me, I would reorganize all my plans in accordance with with this. Can anything be done to achieve such coordination?"

The British Committee of Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister noted that "it is impossible to make a final decision until we have information about the future plans of the Russians," and asked that a "high-ranking officer" be sent to Moscow with the task of - read the necessary information from the Russians. Understanding the importance and urgency of the issue, Roosevelt and Churchill on December 24 turned to Stalin with a request to accept a responsible representative of Eisenhower's headquarters. Stalin agreed. At the end of December, the Chief of Staff under the Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force in Europe, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, flew from France to the USSR for consultations, but due to the bad weather that had set in over the Mediterranean, he got stuck in Cairo. Then the Prime Minister of Great Britain

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I decided to get at least some information from the Kremlin myself. On January 6, 1945, Churchill, deliberately exaggerating, sent a telegram to Marshal Stalin with the following content:

"Very heavy fighting is going on in the West, and at any time big decisions may be required from the Allied High Command.

You yourselves know from your own experience how disturbing the situation is when one has to defend a very wide front after a temporary loss of initiative. It is very desirable and necessary for Eisenhower to know in general terms what you intend to do, since this, of course, will affect all of his and our most important decisions. According to the message we received, our emissary, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, was still in Cairo last night due to weather conditions. His trip was greatly delayed, but not through your fault. If he has not yet arrived at your place, I shall be grateful if you can let me know whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front or elsewhere during January, and any other points of which you might want to mention. I will not pass on this highly classified information to anyone, with the exception of Field Marshal Brooke and General Eisenhower, and only on condition that this is kept in the strictest secrecy. I consider the matter urgent."

A day later, the prime minister received a reply:

"We are preparing for the offensive, but the weather is not favorable for its beginning. However, taking into account the situation of our allies on the Western Front, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided to complete the preparations at an accelerated pace and, regardless of the weather, open wide offensive operations against the Germans along the entire Central Front no later than the second half of January. You can be sure that we will do everything that is possible to do in order to assist our glorious allied forces."

Churchill was delighted: now it was possible to plan further actions, knowing that for several

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In the coming weeks, all German forces on the Eastern Front will be pinned down by the Russians.

Marshal Tedder, who finally arrived in Moscow, on January 15, confidentially told that the Red Army had to launch an offensive on the Soviet-German front ahead of schedule. All for the sake of helping the "glorious allied troops." Over time, this tale was transformed into an official myth, which was reflected in many "scientific" and memoir works: Churchill "in connection with the breakthrough of the front in the Ardennes by the Germans" turned to the Soviet leadership with "pleas for help"; Stalin wanted to start the winter offensive on January 20, but, true to his "comradely duty", he heeded the pleas and ordered his marshals to step up and reduce the preparation time by a week; as a result - "our powerful offensive saved the Anglo-Americans from disaster."

All this, to put it mildly, is not true.

Firstly, the German attempt to seize the initiative and "paralyze the enemy" on the Western Front quite predictably failed due to the lack of dedicated forces and lack of fuel, and on January 3, the Allies launched a counteroffensive, which developed slowly, with a creak, but quite successfully. The British Prime Minister notified Moscow on January 5: "The battle in Belgium is very difficult, but Eisenhower and Montgomery believe that we are the masters of

provisions."

Secondly, on the eve of the Yalta Conference of the Three Powers, it was important for Stalin to take control of the entire territory of Poland. The time has come to put an end to the long discussion with London and Washington about the fate of the Polish state. On December 31, 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation, which met in Lublin, "expressing the will of millions of working people", declared itself the Provisional Government.

President Roosevelt persistently urged Stalin not to rush into his official recognition, given "the fact that so far only a small part of Poland proper, lying west of the Curzon line, has been freed from German tyranny, and therefore it is an undeniable truth that

that the Polish people were not given the opportunity to speak out in regard to the Lublin Committee." Iosif Vissarionovich replied that the Presidium of the Supreme Council had already made a positive decision on this issue, and "this circumstance makes me powerless to fulfill your wish."

On January 6, 1945, a message was published in Moscow on the recognition by the Soviet Union of the "People's Democratic Government" of the Polish Republic. The only thing left to do was to deliver this puppet government to Warsaw under the cover of Soviet tanks and present the world with a fait accompli, finally throwing "a bunch of Polish emigrants in London" into the dustbin of history.

Thirdly, the concentration of Soviet troops on the Vistula bridgeheads, which began immediately after the New Year, was practically completed by January 9th. Among other formations, the initial areas were occupied by tank armies, which did not make sense to keep in such a limited space for two weeks (for example, Rybalko's army crossed to the Sandomierz bridgehead by the morning of January 5) - the bridgeheads were packed to capacity with people and technology. 23 divisions and 5,348 pieces of artillery fit on the Magnushevsky bridgehead, 16 divisions and 3,324 pieces of artillery on the Pulawy bridgehead (not counting anti-aircraft guns and guards mortars). The 8th Guards Army had an offensive zone of about 7 kilometers along the front, in which 75-80 artillery regiments were deployed at a depth of up to 5 kilometers.

Chief Commissar of the 3rd Guards Tank Army Lieutenant General N.K. Popel colorfully describes this picture:

"Hundreds of tanks, cannons, vehicles, placed in squares, tens of thousands of soldiers seemed to fill every meter, excluding roads. A cannon, or a tank, or ammunition was buried under any tree, and when a shell flew overhead, quacking like a night duck, the ELK involuntarily thought: "It will hit, it's impossible to miss here." The bridgehead reminded me of a Persian carpet, where there is no place without Patterns and stripes: even here it was impossible to find a piece that was not dug up by dugouts, trenches and pits.

And everywhere "there was a deep confidence in success." Especially in headquarters. Those who were sitting in the trenches, despite the incantations that "the German is no longer the same", knew that there would be no easy walk. This mood was noted by Ilya Ehrenburg: "Everyone understood that the matter was coming to an end, but no one was sure that he would live to see it ... The proximity of the denouement made death especially ridiculous and terrible." And even "defeatist" moods in the Red Army environment took place: "Here we allowed the German to the Volga and defeated him there, and now he will try to arrange Stalingrad for us somewhere."

In the directives of November 25 and 28, regarding the terms for Konev and Zhukov, it was written: "The start of the offensive is in accordance with the instructions you personally received." But the directive of November 30 specifically ordered General of the Army Petrov to prepare a right-flank army for the offensive "with the aim of capturing Krakow no later than the beginning of January 1945 in cooperation with the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front."

Only extremely unfavorable weather conditions prevented the immediate start of the operation - it would be a shame not to use the air armada of 5,000 aircraft for its intended purpose. The Supreme Commander also wrote to Churchill about this: "It is very important to use our superiority over the Germans in artillery and aviation. In these types, clear weather is required for aviation and the absence of low fogs that prevent artillery from conducting aimed fire.

In general, it was not difficult for Comrade Stalin to render the allies a service that cost nothing. He himself was not going to wait any longer, winter in Europe is shorter and more capricious than in Russia. To that



The conduct of the operation was facilitated by the fact that significant forces of the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe, including two tank armies and 2,400 aircraft, were sent to the Western Front.

On such a scale, it was impossible to hide the preparations for the offensive. The German command had no doubts that it was from the bridgeheads that the Soviets' breakthrough to Berlin would begin. German intelligence correctly imagined the plan of the Soviet offensive and quite accurately revealed the composition of the Soviet groupings. In addition to agents, the Germans

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They received information from prisoners and, strange as it may sound, from defectors. It is written in the OKW war diary: "Strike groups are emerging in the areas of Baranov, Pulawy, Magnushev and in East Prussia, i.e. which have long been established by us.

Marshal Konev had no illusions: "The bridgehead was filled in advance, one might say, packed with troops. This, of course, was not and could not be a secret for the enemy. Who is not clear that if one side has seized such a large bridgehead, and even on such a large river as the Vistula, then a new powerful blow should be expected from here. If a bridgehead is captured, then it is captured in order to take further offensive actions from it. So the place of our future breakthrough was not a secret for the enemy.

And time, by the way, too.

Guderian writes: "We expected that the offensive would begin on January 12, 1945." They calculated correctly. It is noteworthy that the German General Staff "calculated" literally on the same day when Stalin dictated a message to Churchill with "very secret information". Four days before the Soviet offensive, the commanders of Army Group A and Army Group Center proposed to covertly leave defensive positions on the western banks of the Vistula and Narew and retreat 20 kilometers, occupying less extended rear lines, which made it possible to remove from the front and withdraw to the operational reserve at least a few DIVISIONS.

On January 9, the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, armed with maps and diagrams showing the balance of forces on the Eastern Front, arrived in Ziegenberg to report to the Fuhrer. The final figures, deduced by the head of the "Foreign armies - East" department, General Gehlen, proved that the Russians in the Berlin direction have 15 times superiority on land and 20 times in the air:

"When I showed these developments to Hitler, he burst into anger, called them completely idiotic and demanded that I send the compiler of these schemes to a madhouse ...

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Harpe and Reinhardt's proposals were rejected. The expected venomous remarks were made against the generals, who always understood by the term "operate" only a retreat to the next reserve positions.

All efforts to create large operational reserves in the threatened sectors of the greatly stretched Eastern Front were shattered by the confused position of Hitler and Jodl. The mood of the high command of the armed forces was dominated by the unfounded opinion that our accurate information about the upcoming major Russian offensive could be just a big bluff. There, in general, they willingly believed only in what they wanted, and turned a blind eye to the harsh reality.

Reichsmarschall Goering, who was present at the meeting, stated authoritatively that eight thousand Russian aircraft were just plywood models. They aren't scary at all.

In short, "the report failed." Seething with indignation, General Guderian asked for a vacation or a room in a madhouse next to Gehlen and retired, cursing in his soul "ostrich

policy and strategy of self-deception".

It only remained to wait for the collapse of the "house of cards" of the Eastern Front. We didn't have to wait long.

On January 12, the army of I.S. was the first to go on the offensive. Konev and the armies of I.E. Petrov.

On the 1st Ukrainian Front at 05:00, after a 15-minute fire raid, the front lines went on the attack, they are, as a rule, penal battalions, colloquially referred to as "accordion schools", and assault engineering and sapper companies. They easily captured the first trench, but then the troops ran into obstacles, mortar fire and artillery. At 10:00 a.m., the marshal ordered a full-fledged artillery preparation, and it must be said that almost 12,000 guns and mortars were concentrated on the Sando Mir bridgehead. Aviation, due to difficult meteorological conditions, did not work that day: thick snow fell from the sky in flakes, there was virtually no visibility.

Big guns, according to Konev, fired with the highest efficiency: "Captured in the first hours

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breakthrough, the commanders of the fascist German units showed that their soldiers and officers had lost all self-control. They arbitrarily, (and for the Germans, this, frankly, is not typical) left their positions. The German soldier, as a rule - and this rule was confirmed throughout the war - sat where he was ordered until he received permission to withdraw. But on this day, January 12, the fire was so merciless and destructive that the survivors could no longer control themselves.

General V.S. Arkhipov is even cleaner: "The trenches and communication passages were littered with the corpses of the Nazis. It was the 68th German Infantry Division that perished here. All, entirely. With headquarters and rear services.

True, those who directly observed the breakthrough of the enemy defense had a different opinion: "There was no enemy at the turn of the 2nd and 3rd lines of infantry trenches, with the exception of small groups and single shooters and machine gunners. From the very dawn, fog hung over the battlefield and limited visibility along the horizon to 1-1.5 km, and in height to 400-500 m. In view of this, neither the results of powerful artillery fire, nor the enemy on whom this fire was fired, could be seen from the OP. At the NP of the commander of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, there was an opinion that almost two hours of artillery preparation was carried out in an empty place, from where the enemy had already retreated. Subsequently, the testimony of the prisoners and the viewing of some areas that have undergone our artillery treatment, this assumption was confirmed.

A specific prisoner from the 68th Infantry Division reported that "in the evening of 11.1.45, an order was announced to the soldiers that from the morning of 12.1.45 the Russians would go on the offensive, so the 196th Infantry Regiment should withdraw in a westerly direction."

Indeed, the main forces of the Germans, leaving cover, went to the rear line, so the question is debatable, whose corpses were littered with trenches and communications. Most likely, this is the fantasy of a memoirist, coupled with the frills of his literary handler.

The main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front, supported by a double barrage of fire, launched an offensive at 11.50 and for two or three hours of fighting with the German rearguards,

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the first and second trenches of the first line of defense were seized with great success: "The infantry of the 52nd Army encountered resistance during its offensive only in separate strongholds and was delayed on

mined areas of the area.

To complete the breakthrough already at 2 p.m. Konev brought into battle the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies, the 31st and 4th Guards Tank Corps - more than 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns. which had the desired effect. By the end of the day, the troops of the front overcame the first line of defense in a 35-kilometer section and reached the second one, wedging in to a depth of 15-20 kilometers. The advance of the main tank forces was hindered only by the fact that all the roads and routes were clogged with artillery and vehicles of the combined arms armies. For this reason, on the evening of January 12, the 7th Guards Tank Corps, advancing in the second echelon, had not yet reached the front line, the atyls of Rybalko's army still remained in the starting areas. The corps of the 4th Panzer Army, introduced in the band of the 13th Army, Colonel General I.P. Pukhov, remained behind the combat formations of the infantry until the morning.

During the night, the attackers fought for the second lane. By 10 o'clock on January 13, the forward detachment of the 6th Guards Tank Corps under the command of Colonel I.I. Yakubovsky - the 51st Guards Tank Brigade, reinforced by a self-propelled artillery regiment, a Katyusha division, a battalion of submachine gunners and two sapper companies, entered the Nida River in the Sobkuv region and captured a bridgehead on the western bank. The infantry crossed the ice, the tanks crossed the ford, having previously destroyed the thin ice shell with artillery shots. Almost simultaneously, to the north, the 63rd Guards Chelyabinsk Tank Brigade from Lelyushenko's army began to cross the river.

On the second day of the battle, the Germans tried to launch a planned counterattack on the flanks of the Russian wedge with the forces of the 24th Panzer Corps of General Walter Nering. The 16th Panzer (145 tanks and self-propelled guns) and the 20th Panzergrenadier (73 tanks) divisions were aiming south from the Kelge area, and the 17th Panzer divisions (156 tanks and self-propelled guns) from the Pinchuv area to the north. The pincers were supposed to close at Lesuv. However

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By this time, the 17th Panzer Division itself found itself squeezed between the flanks of two Soviet tank armies and was forced to go on the defensive in the Khmelnik area.

Faced with the enemy's reserves, General Lelyushenko decided to suspend the advance of the forward detachments, make a two-sided envelopment of the units of the 17th Panzer Division and, in cooperation with the 6th Guards Tank Corps of the 3rd Panzer Army, simultaneously attack both her flanks. From the front, it was supposed to pin down the enemy with two tank brigades and artillery, brought to direct fire. By the end of the day, after a fierce battle, the 17th Panzer Division was surrounded by units of the 10th Panzer and 6th Mechanized Corps and, having lost almost all of its equipment, began to break through to the north. The Soviet troops occupied Khmilnik, the center of resistance of the second line of defense.

In the Lesuva area, the 61st Guards Sverdlovsk-Lvov Tank Brigade, Colonel N.G. Zhukova clashed with Major Samish's 501st heavy tank battalion, which had 54 regular Tigers and 18 Kings in service. The brigade met the enemy in defensive battle formations and managed to repel the blow. However, she herself suffered heavy losses. Both the Soviet brigade commander and the German battalion commander died in the battle.

The 16th Panzer Division of the enemy was pinned down by the 49th Mechanized Brigade in the Radomice region, and then was attacked by the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army.

"Almost two days," paints D.D. Lelyushenko, a bloody tank battle lasted, in which up to 1000 tanks took part. A number of settlements and frontiers passed from hand to hand, shooting was carried out at close range, tanks were on fire. The Nazis tried to go around our flanks, but immediately ran into anti-tank guns set up in ambush. On the night of January 14, the battle went on with growing ferocity. The tanks were mixed up, it was hard to tell where they were ours and where they were strangers.

By morning, a major defeat had been inflicted on the enemy, more than 180 tanks of the 16th and 17th tank divisions of the enemy were on fire on the battlefield. The headquarters of the 16th Panzer Division of the enemy was

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captured, and the 20th motorized was defeated, the officers fled.

Corps Neringa retreated to the north, to Kielce.

In these battles, the BS-3 anti-tank guns, created by Vasily Grabin specifically for the fight against the "tigers", were highly appreciated. Converted from the 100-mm B-34 naval gun, the most powerful BS-3 had one unpleasant design flaw: it bounced when fired, knocking down the aim and trying to cripple the gunner. But on the other hand, it made holes in any armored vehicles from one and a half kilometers. So, repelling the attack of the 17th Panzer Division, two batteries from the 199th Light Artillery Brigade, "firing at a distance of more than 1000 m, hit self-propelled 75-mm guns and T-4 tanks, they themselves were out of reach of a direct shot of enemy armored units. ".

Nevertheless, enemy counterattacks disrupted the movement schedule envisaged by the plans, causing displeasure of the army commanders. Rybalko reprimanded the commander of the 6th Guards Tank Corps, Major General V.V. Novikov:

"You have lost time and corps control. I categorically order by the morning of 14.1.45 the main forces to be on the western bank of the river. Nida. Pull the body into a fist, do not scatter. The enemy is in a worse position, he must be beaten, not evaded.

During the day of January 14, the main forces of the 3rd Guards Tank Army forded and built bridges, having lost a total of 25 combat vehicles stuck and sunken, crossed the Nida River, not allowing the enemy to gain a foothold on this line. To the south, with the support of two tank corps, the troops of the 5th Guards Army, Colonel General A.S., successfully moved forward. Zhadov (32nd, 33rd, 34th Guards Rifle Corps).

Thus, within three days, the German defenses in front of the Sandomierz bridgehead were broken. The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front went on to pursue: the 4th Panzer Army bypassed Kielce from the south, Rybalko's army on January 15, with two tank corps, reached the Pilica River, capturing

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bridgeheads on its left bank. Combined-arms armies followed them.

As we moved forward, a gap formed between the 5th Guards and 60th Armies. in which the front commander introduced the 59th army (43rd, 115th rifle corps, 245th rifle division), reassigning the 4th guards Kantemirovsky tank corps of Lieutenant General P.P. Poluboyarov (197 tanks, 42 self-propelled guns, 82 armored vehicles) and the 17th breakthrough artillery division of Major General S.S. Volkenstein.

By the end of January 15, the troops of the 5th Guards Army reached Pilica, and the 59th and 60th - to the enemy's third line of defense northeast of Krakow.

The deep breakthrough of the 1st Ukrainian Front and the beginning of the offensive of the 1st Belorussian Front put the German troops defending along the Vistula, between the Puławy and Sandomierz bridgeheads, under the threat of encirclement. The commander of the 4th Panzer Army, General Franz Grezer, ordered the withdrawal of divisions of the 42nd Army Corps to the Skarzysko-Kamenna area. Ensuring his withdrawal, the enemy increased resistance in the Kielce region. The formations of the 24th tank corps of Nering and parts of the 72nd infantry division thrown back here strengthened the defense of the city, which was stormed from three directions by the formations of the 3rd guards, 13th and 4th tank armies. Kielce fell on the evening of 15 January. At the same time, the troops of the 6th Army (22nd, 74th Rifle

corps, 359th rifle division) pursued formations of the 42nd corps, retreating from the ledge north of Sandomierz. Going on the offensive at 4 p.m., they captured the cities of Ostrovets and Opatow. Together with the 25th Tank Corps, Major General E.I. Fominykh, in spite of the enemy, the divisions of Gordov's 3rd Guards Army (76th, 120th, and 21st Rifle Corps) advanced to the north.

From the very beginning of the Soviet offensive, General Guderian urged Hitler to abandon "his battles in the Vosges" and return to Berlin as soon as possible and thereby "at least outwardly shift the center of gravity of our military operations back to

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East". The Fuhrer, carried away by plans to defeat the Anglo-Americans, denied and repeated that there were quite enough forces on the Eastern Front. Gradually, however, it dawned on him that things in the East were not going quite the way he had imagined. On January 15, the "Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht" decided to transfer his headquarters to the Imperial Chancellery and along the way, without consulting anyone, made a military decision that plunged the Chief of the General Staff of the OKH into despair: to immediately transfer the tank corps "Grossdeutschland" from East Prussia to the Kielce region and prevent a breakthrough in the direction of Posen. The corps, commanded by General Dietrich von Saucken, included the parachute-tank division "Hermann Goering", motorized divisions "Grossdeutschland" and "Brandenburg".

Guderian believed that, firstly, it would not work "immediately", secondly, the "Grossdeutschland" corps was located exactly where it should be, thirdly, the necessary troops could be taken in Courland, where from them there is no point, or transfer from the Western Front, stopping offensive activity there:

"It should be mentioned that the echelons with the combat units of this corps would still not have had time to arrive in time to stop the Russian offensive, but would have been removed from the defensive lines in East Prussia at a time when the crisis of the Russian offensive was brewing there. Their withdrawal from there at the present time would mean that the same catastrophe would begin in East Prussia as happened on the Vistula. These combat-ready divisions were at the railway stations, while the battles that decided the outcome of the war were going on.

When Guderian did not agree with the order, Hitler "fell into a rage" and insisted on his own. A day later, Guderian lost his temper when he learned that the Fuhrer had given the order to withdraw the 6th SS Panzer Army from the Western Front, but to send it not to the Oder, but to Hungary to unblock Budapest.

On January 16, the armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front pursued the enemy throughout the entire 250-kilometer strip. The command of the Wehrmacht tried to withdraw the remnants of its formations beyond

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the Pilica River, however, attempts to organize defense at the line prepared here were frustrated by the actions of the Soviet TROOPS.

Together with the 4th tank army, the 13th army of Pukhov (24th, 102nd, 27th rifle corps), having made a 40-kilometer throw, crossed Pilica by Exodus on January 17. The troops of the 52nd and 5th Guards Armies, using the successful actions of the 3rd Guards Tank Army and advancing at a rate of 20-30 kilometers per day, overcame Pilica, crossed the Warta River and took the cities of Radomsko and Cz stochowa from the tankers. By order of Rybalko, the 52nd Guards Tank Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kurist, rushed north, covered 50 kilometers, captured Piotrkow with a night attack on January 18 and held it until the approach of Lelyushenko's units.

The high saturation of the advancing armies with engineering and sapper units contributed to the rapid overcoming of water barriers: "All the first echelons of our troops, especially tank and mechanized ones, went into a breakthrough with a set, even a superset

transportation facilities. This allowed them to build crossings across the rivers in the depths of the enemy's defenses with the utmost speed."

Head of the engineering troops of the front, General I.P. Galitsky: "I involuntarily thought how rich our front had become. It now had three assault engineer-engineer brigades, one motorized engineering brigades, and two pontoon-bridge brigades. There are six brigades in total, not counting five separate front-line battalions. In addition, the armies had one engineer brigade each, and in corps and divisions there was one engineer battalion. This is a huge engineering force. And how did the war start? 201 engineer-sapper battalions, and even those were on the construction of fortifications of the western state borders. And today there are 1129 battalions in the active army. There were no engineering brigades before the war. Now they are 10%.

And, of course, the absence of rear lines of German troops played a significant role. As General G.V. Baklanov, former commander of the 34th Guards Arrows

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kovoy corps: "Moving towards Czȳstochowa, our units were approaching the border of the German Reich. Not far from the city and to the east of it, we crossed a well-equipped line of German fortifications: deep, I would say well-maintained trenches, impressive-looking pillboxes and bunkers. But the Nazis were not there, so we walked several tens of kilometers, so to speak, without hindrance, suffering mainly from the fact that all the time we were significantly ahead of our carts and often left without hot food.

On January 17, the 3rd Guards and 6th Armies approached Skarzhisko-Kamenna and the next day, having captured the city, they joined up with the troops of the 33rd Army of the Belorussian Front. The "ring" conceived by the Soviet command closed, however, thanks to the stubborn resistance of Nering's divisions and the unsuccessful actions of General Gordov's divisions, the trap turned out to be empty - the enemy managed to withdraw troops from the Vistula to the west and avoided encirclement. The last to leave towards Lodz was the 24th Panzer Corps.

Fierce fighting flared up in the direction of Krakow. The German command took all measures to organize defense on the outskirts of Krakow, which covered the way to the Silesian industrial region. The 59th and 60th armies, repelling counterattacks, reached the outskirts of the city by the end of January 17th. By this time, the right flank of the 17th Army of General Schulz was bypassed by the troops of the 38th Army of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

Thus, in six days, the 1st Ukrainian Front defeated the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army and, in cooperation with the 4th Ukrainian Front, inflicted a serious defeat on the 17th Army of the enemy.

The offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front began on January 14. At first, with a certain degree of hope, the military leaders expected the weather to improve, but, "the closer to the morning, the thicker and heavier the fog became, turning into an impenetrable curtain." At this time, sappers made passages in minefields, agitators inspired fighters to exploits,

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political workers held party and Komsomol meetings:

"Party member Konstantinov is instructed to measure the depths of the Pilica River," comes the voice of the secretary. - The commander of the department, communist Nikitin, is instructed to be the first to cross the river. Nikitin, do you know that there is a strong fortification on the other side of the Pilica?

- Yes sir. I will justify the trust of the party!

"Komsomol member Vasily Pogromsky," one hears nearby, "is instructed to hoist a pennant of the Central Committee of the Komsomol on the other side of the Pilica ..."

The units read out the appeal of the Military Council of the front, which domestic historians avoid quoting out of natural bashfulness, but Dr. Goebbels dreamed of "breaking through" his publication in the world press:

"The great hour has struck!

The time has come to deliver the last, decisive blow to the enemy and fulfill the historic task set by Comrade

Stalin: to finish off the fascist beast in his own lair and hoist the banner of Victory over Berlin!

The time has come to pay off the German fascist degenerates. Great and unbearably burning our hatred! We have not forgotten the humiliation and grief inflicted on our people by Hitler's cannibals. We have not forgotten the cities and villages burned to the ground on them. We remember our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our wives and children, who were tortured by the Germans. We will avenge those who were burned in hellish furnaces, those who were killed in gas chambers, those who were shot and hanged. We will severely avenge everything.

We are going to Germany, and behind us are Stalingrad, Ukraine and Belarus, we are walking on the ashes of our cities and villages, on the bloody footprints left by our Soviet people, tortured to death and torn to pieces

fascist jackals.

Let the country of murderers tremble with horror!

, Nothing will hold us back! We swore to our fallen friends and our children that we would not lay down our weapons until we finished with the criminals. Behind

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death, for the blood of the Soviet people the fascist thugs will pay many times over with their black blood...

Destroying the fascist beast, we will fulfill to the end our role as a liberating army. The war cannot be ended until the Soviet people languish in German slavery and the fascist nest of robbers and robbers is not destroyed...

This time we will finally crush the German geeks!

We are stronger than the enemy. Our guns, planes and tanks are better than the German ones, and we have more of them than the enemy. This first-class weapon was given to us by the people who ensured our victories with their heroic labor.

We are stronger than the enemy because we are fighting for a just cause, against slavery and enslavement. We are educated, organized and inspired to exploits by the party of Lenin-Stalin, the party of victory.

We are stronger than the enemy thanks to the wisdom of our Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Marshal of the Soviet Union Comrade Stalin, who leads the struggle of our people and the Red Army. And we know: Stalin is with us and victory is ours.

Our goal is clear. The days of Nazi Germany are numbered. The keys to victory are in our hands...

For our Soviet homeland, for our heroic people, for our beloved Stalin - forward, comrades!

Death to the German invaders!

Long Live the Victory!"

At 7 in the morning, hot cabbage soup and 100 grams of vodka were smashed through the trenches.

The wine portion saga is worthy of a separate study.

On August 22, 1941, when the Germans smashed the first strategic echelon of the Red Army to smithereens, went to Kiev, captured Gomel, Kirovograd, Smolensk, got close to Leningrad, the State Defense Committee, among other measures to raise the morale of the troops, such as shooting from all types of weapons at "cowardly elements" and repressive measures against the families of "traitors and deserters", decided to start issuing vodka to all personal

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the composition of the "front line of the army" in the amount of 100 grams per day. On May 11, 1942, on the eve of the summer strategic offensive, which was supposed to lead to "the final defeat of the Nazi troops and the liberation of the Soviet land from the Nazi scoundrels", it was decided not to transfer vodka in vain, but to give it out in the form of encouragement "only to servicemen of the front line units who have had success in combat operations against the German invaders." Those who are successful get a full glass every day, the rest get half a glass and only on holidays. However, there were no successes, and there was a shameful defeat of the Soviet troops in the Crimea and near Kharkov. A month later, even the "leaders" ration was halved. In November 1942, when the fate of the country was being decided, it was again decided to pour the entire active army: units engaged in direct combat operations, and units engaged in work at the forefront, sitting in the trenches and located in the divisional reserve, and even wounded with the permission of a doctor. The final opinion of the State Defense Committee was developed only on April 30, 1943, "by deciding to "stop the mass distribution of vodka" and issue 100 grams per day to "servicemen of those units of the front line that are conducting offensive operations."

Of course, in the first place, the "product" in unlimited quantities was consumed by those who were supposed to distribute it, and the fathers-commanders. Formally, the People's Commissariat of Defense tried to fight this and periodically issued formidable orders:

"Despite repeated instructions and categorical demands on the issuance of vodka in the active army strictly for its intended purpose and according to established standards, the

there are cases of illegal issuance of vodka.

Vodka is issued to headquarters, commanders and units that do not have the right to receive it.

Some commanders of units and formations and commanders of headquarters and departments, taking advantage of their official position, "take vodka from warehouses, regardless of orders and established procedures."

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and to appoint as storekeepers and storekeepers "specially selected honest, trusted persons who can ensure the complete safety of vodka." Here with this was the eternal problem. For some reason, honest persons in such positions did not stay long, but instantly found themselves in the trenches, their the rear rats were naturally replaced, able to please the authorities and not forget themselves. Therefore, on



advanced vodka was the last to be received, and the Red Army soldiers got the established norm at the expense of their dead comrades.

There was no weather. Without waiting for favors from nature, Marshal Zhukov, who was at the command post of the 5th shock army, ordered to "start the game".

At 8.30 the music stopped and more than 10,000 artillery pieces fired. The most powerful fire raid lasted only 25 minutes. Then the reinforced rifle battalions of the "reconnaissance echelon", supported by a barrage of fire, advanced 2-3 kilometers within an hour without meeting organized resistance. Their success was immediately developed by the main forces of the shock group of the front. Zhukov decided not to carry out the planned full artillery preparation, which made it possible to save almost 30,000 tons of ammunition.

The 5th shock army (26th guards, 32nd, 9th rifle corps) of Colonel General N.E. Berzarin and the 8th Guards Army (28th, 29th, 4th Guards Rifle Corps, 6th Artillery Corps of the RGK breakthrough) Colonel General V.I. Chuikov, breaking through the first line of defense of the 6th and 251st infantry divisions, by the end of the day they advanced to a depth of 12 kilometers. At the same time, the rifle units of the 5th shock not only crossed the Pilica River on ice, but also captured serviceable bridges. 61st Army (9th Guards, 80th, 89th Rifle Corps) under the command of Colonel General P.A. Belova crossed the Pilica River and wedged into the enemy defenses for 2-3 kilometers.

At the same time, the 69th (91st, 25th, 61st rifle corps) and 33rd (16th, 38th, 62nd rifle corps) armies struck from the Pulawy bridgehead. Already by 14.00 their troops had overcome the first

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defense line, after which the 11th and 9th tank corps of generals I.I. Yushchukai I.F. Kirichenko. During the day, the 69th Army advanced to a depth of 20 kilometers, the 33rd Army - up to 15 kilometers.

The 1st Battalion of the 215th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 77th Guards Rifle Division, which paved the way for the entire army, especially distinguished itself. Former platoon commander Mikhail Guryev recalled: "On the eve of the offensive, the regimental banner was carried along the trenches, and we kissed it ... We felt like suicide bombers. They knew how the Germans fortified themselves here. They made all kinds of messages, shot every bump. I had to wade through the terrible barriers... In the attack "Hurrah!" no one shouted, physically it is simply impossible, all the forces - to the throw. Our gunners almost razed the first trench to the ground - only corpses. Other companies lay down on the second trench, and we and her whole slipped through. They broke forward and helped the neighbors - with fire from the flank.

Noting the mass heroism shown by the unit during the breakthrough, the Military Council of the 69th Army awarded the battalion the honorary name "Battalion of Glory". All privates and non-commissioned officers of the battalion, alive and dead - about 350 people - were awarded the Orders of Glory, platoon commanders - Orders of Alexander Nevsky, company commanders - Orders of the Red Banner. Battalion commander, 23-year-old guard major B.N. Emelyanov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The case is unique. However, the 77th Guards Chernihiv Red Banner Order of Suvorov was a unique formation! degree infantry division. She took part in the most famous battles of the Patriotic War: in the battles near Moscow and near Stalingrad, in the Oryol offensive operation and the forcing of the Dnieper, in the Bagration operation and the capture of the Vistula bridgeheads, each time gaining honorary titles and awards. . After reaching the Oder, the Order of Lenin will appear on her Battle Banner. And if the Battalion of Glory appeared in the 215th regiment, then in the 2nd battalion of the 218th rifle regiment, the Company of Heroes forgot. Throughout the war in the 69th Army, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 122 soldiers and commanders, in the 77th

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there were 67 of them in the guard division. From the Volga to the Elbe, the division "plowed" under the command of Major General V.S. Aska-lepova.

Soviet aviation on that day was not able to take to the air. | |

On January 15, at 14:00, in the offensive zone of the 8th Guards Army, the 1st Guards Tank Army of Colonel General M.E. Katukov (11th Guards Tank Corps, 8th Guards Mechanized Corps, 64th Guards Tank Brigade - 792 tanks and self-propelled guns). By the end of the day, its advanced brigades, having advanced 40-50 kilometers, reached the Pilica River. On the same day, north of Warsaw, the 47th Army (77th, 125th, and 129th Rifle Corps) went on the offensive. Its formations broke through the enemy defenses and proceeded to force the Vistula. The next day, having crossed the Pilica, the 2nd Guards Tank Army of Colonel General S.I. entered the "clean breakthrough" made by Berzarin's divisions. Bogdanov (9th and 12th Guards Tank, 1st Mechanized Corps - 840 tanks and self-propelled guns) and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps of General V.V. Kryukov. Rapidly developing success, the tank army overtook the infantry and made a 60-kilometer throw, and its forward detachments reached Sokhachev, in the rear of the 46th tank corps of General Walter Fries, which was defending Warsaw. True, there were some unpleasant surprises:

"The tank units of the army in the Sokhachev area for the first time met with the massive use of "faustpatrons" and, having no experience in dealing with them, had losses in settlements and road junctions and developed methods of action to destroy the "faustniks" during the battles.

The surprise was not the fact that the Germans had another "Wonder Weapon", but precisely its "mass use".

The development of "reactive" and "dynamo-reactive" anti-tank guns has been carried out in different countries since the early 1930s. However, they were not developed in the USSR: the proposed systems were inefficient and unreliable, many

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many enthusiasts of this direction, as well as their patrons, had to be squandered as "enemies of the people." Anti-tank guns were considered the main means of anti-tank defense, with which the Red Army was provided like no other army in the world. Therefore, by the beginning of World War II, the Soviet infantry did not have effective anti-tank melee weapons. Only in August 1941 were 14.5-mm anti-tank rifles designed by V.A. Degtyarev and S.G. Simonov. The measure was forced - in the border battle, the troops lost 1,100 guns a day. Simple, reliable and fairly effective anti-tank guns played a big role in the fight against German tanks, Soviet newspapers glorified the exploits of armor-piercing heroes. However, they were powerless against the armored vehicles of the final period of the war.

In Germany, in the summer of 1943, as part of the "Infantry Armament Program", along with reactive anti-tank rifles, analogues of the American bazooka, the Panzerfaust was adopted - a disposable grenade launcher with an over-caliber cumulative grenade, which became widely known in the Red Army as "faustpatron". The device was extremely simple and consisted of two main parts: a 101-mm or 150-mm grenade and a tube with an expelling powder charge and a trigger mechanism. A year later, the industry was churning out hundreds of thousands of them, and by the end of 1944, a million a month.

Any kid from the Volkssturm could master the Panzerfaust, the entire "system" weighed 3.25 or 5.35 kg. To fire a shot, it was necessary to take the grenade launcher under the arm or put it on the shoulder, raise the aiming bar (the rim of the grenade served as the front sight), remove the fuse and press the start button. The maximum effective range was 75 m, the effective range was about 35 m. Depending on the caliber, the grenade burned through 140–200 mm of armor. The use of a cumulative warhead provided the same damaging effect regardless of the distance.

Soviet armchair specialists "Panzerfaust" are not

` Impressed: weak expelling charge, short range, undershot

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accurate shooting accuracy is not a "wonder weapon", but another "ersatz". But our tankers remembered him well. Numerous "faustniks" turned out to be a dangerous enemy, especially in the tightness and confusion of street fighting.

Soon this was felt in the 3rd Guards Tank Army, whose headquarters immediately issued the following recommendations:

"Instead of breaking into settlements from secondary directions, unexpectedly appearing in front of the enemy, sowing panic and fear with the fire of their weapons, tank units move along the main highways, suffering losses from faustpatrons, tank destroyers that have settled in houses and shelters.

The Faustpatron, operating at a distance of 60-100m, is not and cannot be a formidable and serious weapon against tanks. Meanwhile, 20% of tanks that were out of order received combat damage from them, and the irretrievable death of tanks from faustpatrons is more than 30%.

The headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front, summarizing the information received, hastily developed instructions for combating the new threat: "It was recommended to widely use the shielding of tanks and self-propelled artillery installations. Faustpatrons, breaking through hinged screens made of sheet iron, then met with emptiness and, having lost their destructive power, did not cause much damage to the combat vehicle. Most of them ricocheted on the armor. One of the most effective means of combating enemy Faustniks was the clear and continuous interaction of infantrymen with tankmen, comradely assistance in battle.

As for the anti-cumulative screens, our craftsmen guessed for themselves. In the field, everything that came to hand was welded onto the armor: sheets of metal, nets, armored soldier's beds.

The most comprehensive instruction was "developed" by the brilliant Zhukov: "About the "faustpatrons" you will tell your grandchildren after the war, and now, without any reasoning, advance forward!"

Albert Speer considered the Panzerfaust a weapon of desperation. General Chuikov, on the contrary, highly appreciated the combat effect

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The ability of the "faustpatron" and even suggested copying its design under the name "Ivan-patron": "The 8th Guards Army, fighters and commanders were in love with these Faust cartridges, stole them from each other and used them with success - efficiently." Soviet soldiers willingly used captured grenade launchers in urban battles. However, as the former head of the GAU, Marshal of Artillery N.D. Yakovlev, "there were no active supporters

such means of anti-tank warfare as the Faustpatron... But he has proven himself very well." That is, there were disagreements between the front and range generals.

At the lower level, for a couple of words "praising enemy equipment", it was quite possible to please the bunk. Writer Vasil Bykov:

"In general, a conversation about the quality of weapons arose among the front-line soldiers quite often - both in hospitals and in moments of a brief lull. Hot topic! It all came down to one thing: what rubbish are our machine guns, machine guns, guns and tanks. But no one dared to talk about it at political classes. Because in all the newspapers one could read: our weapons, our equipment is better than the German ones. They have everything artificial there, solid ersatz — and bread, and soap, and coffee. Moreover, the troops are supplied with an unbearably smelly powder - dust, which is sprinkled over everything in the dugouts. It turned out that it was much more convenient, following our example, to fry lice in barrels than to use them. Sometimes orders were read to us, in which sentences were announced to officers who allowed themselves to praise German weapons, especially tactics. For she, as we heard more than once, was also the best with us. Only a few smiled wryly at the same time, but kept quiet."

Of course, the Panzerfaust was a weapon of desperation. There is no doubt that the losses of tanks from artillery fire were an order of magnitude higher. The Nou of the Wehrmacht "ended" with artillery, and the Volkssturm did not have it at all. And yet, the presence of "faustniks" had a strong moral impact on the tankers: a hit, as a rule, led to the death of the entire crew:

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stations. But the crew is silent... does not respond either to the knock or the radio. There is a small hole in the tower, the diameter of a penny - the little finger will not go through. And this is Faust, his work! Screen

it was torn off in this place, a concentrated explosion hit the armor ... From the tower we get four dead tankers.

Young, recently cheerful strong guys. Cumulative grenade burned steel armor, a fiery whirlwind burst into the car. The splashes of molten steel hit everyone to death."

History has confirmed the fruitfulness of the idea of a light and extremely easy-to-handle anti-tank grenade launcher. But only in 1949 did the Soviet Army receive the offspring of the GSKB-30 of the Ministry of Agricultural Engineering - the RPG-2 hand grenade launcher. It differed fundamentally from the Panzerfaust in that the launch tube was made reusable, the trigger mechanism was mounted in the pistol grip, and the powder propellant charge (in a cardboard sleeve) was screwed to an 80-mm PG-2 over-caliber cumulative action grenade, along the rim which was aimed. Aiming range - 150 m, effective - no more than 100 m, armor penetration - 200 mm. The concept of a disposable grenade launcher was implemented in the USSR twenty years later in the RPG-18.

In an effort to close the gaps that had formed, the command of the 9th German Army brought into battle the 19th and 25th tank divisions (150 tanks) of the 40th tank corps. However, already in the course of the advance, they came under attack from formations of the 1st Belorussian Front and were forced to withdraw.

The troops advancing from the Puławy bridgehead, having broken through the second line of defense, proceeded to pursue the enemy. On the night of January 16, the army of General Kolpakchi and the 11th Panzer Corps stormed the important communication center and powerful stronghold - the city of Radom. Formations of the 33rd Army with the 9th Tank Corps approached the city of Shidlovets.

As a result of two days of fighting, the strikes of the troops of the 1st Belorus

Russian front from two bridgeheads practically merged into one powerful blow in a strip of 120 kilometers.

The exit of the 2nd Guards Tank Army to the area of Sokhachev and the offensive of the 47th Army of Perkhovich north of the Polish capital created a threat of encirclement for the Warsaw group. Under the onslaught of the Soviet troops, the 46th tank corps of the enemy, instead of retreating to the west, to Poznan, was forced to retreat to the northeast, beyond the Vistula. On the morning of January 16, the weather improved markedly, and the 3rd Bomber Air Corps, Major General A.Z. Karavatsky was bombed by ice on the river, attack aircraft of the 6th Air Corps, Major General B.K. Tokarev combed the banks of the Vistula, destroying the crossing facilities, and attacked the German columns, the 3rd Fighter Air Corps of Lieutenant General E.Ya. Savitsky provided cover for ground formations. In two days, the 16th Air Army made 5979 sorties.

On January 16, the 1st Army of the Polish Army under the command of General S.G. went on the offensive. Poplawsky. On the night of January 17, its main forces, having crossed the Vistula in the zone of the 61st Army, approached the city from the south. Of the German troops in Warsaw, four infantry battalions and engineering units remained. The headquarters of Army Group A informed the OKH that it would not be possible to hold the city, moreover, since communication with the garrison was interrupted, it is generally unknown in whose hands it is. Resigned to the inevitable, Guderian immediately gave General Harpa the order to act according to the situation and "to outline the next line of defense, based on the assumption that Warsaw was already in the hands of the enemy." During the report to Hitler, headquarters received a radiogram from the commandant of Warsaw, in which it was reported that he intended to leave the "fortress" during the night.

The Fuhrer literally went berserk and ordered to keep Warsaw at any cost. However, it was not possible to restore the defense - the garrison, having destroyed the rear property, was already leaving.

On the morning of January 17, divisions of the Polish Army simultaneously with units of the 61st and 47th armies started fighting on the streets of Warsaw. By noon, they completely liberated the capital of Poland.

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The city was dead: "Warsaw was mountains of ruins. Everywhere, the walls of destroyed buildings blackened from the flames. The streets are littered with bricks and broken glass." From 1 million 310 thousand of the pre-war population, only 162 thousand remained in it. Retreating, the Germans set up a large number of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, delayed-action land mines and various explosive traps. Soviet sappers immediately set about clearing the most important objects.

The front headquarters moved to the suburbs of Warsaw - Prague. The Provisional Government of E. Osobka-Moravsky also hurried here. Zhukov had to deal with him diplomatically, for which Georgy Konstantinovich, accustomed to dividing people into superiors and others, was organically unsuitable. This irritability of the marshal's feelings is noted by his personal driver A.N. Buchin: "Trouble with absurd and scandalous Polish figures was added to the usual military affairs. In any case, after meetings, although rare, the marshal did not look his best with them.

It was also a shame that the Poles did not celebrate the "liberators" too much, and Poland itself, with the exception of the capital, "suffered little":

"As soon as we crossed the Soviet border, we found ourselves in a different world. In Poland, almost no destruction is visible, in the villages there are cattle, horses. They live very well. The Germans, retreating to the west, do not destroy anything and, of course, do not burn houses. They were surprised, scratched their heads and decided - Europe, then ...

The Red Army fought the Wehrmacht one on one with the general passivity and sometimes hostility of the local residents. Our fighters and commanders gave their lives for them!"

Of course, the Germans destroyed Warsaw badly, but there was no sympathy for the Poles, they were some kind of non-Soviet and hid their girls away from sin:

"The city was laid out almost like our Soviet cities. Perhaps that was the only case during the offensive in Poland, when we encountered rare destruction, reminiscent of the widespread atrocities of the Germans on our lands. On business, I then had to visit several times

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to spend time in Warsaw and watch an amazing picture: the soldiers of the Polish Army hugged and frolicked with the Varsovians, and a lot of our extremely tired sappers with concentrated faces cleared mines from the central streets of the city, cleared them of broken bricks, of all rubbish. They were in a hurry - on January 20, a parade of the Polish Army took place in Warsaw ...

Of course, we were welcomed when the population received German property from the hands of the Red Army. However, often they did not wait until they gave it, but everything that lay badly was enough. The abundance of male youth of draft age who sat out the war was also surprising. Let Ivan fight...

In Poland, as far as we could judge, they prayed to petty trade. At every step we stumbled upon merchants selling something, changing things, and on this occasion trying to get in touch with us - is it possible to get at least something from the Red Army. The merchant spirit permeated the whole country.

The further we went across Poland, the better we understood something else - the Red Army opened the rear of the German Eastern Front, which fed the Wehrmacht in the war against us. Taking at face value the conversations about the love of the local population for us, at first we were in a hurry to smile, stretch out our hands, and so on. The reception was usually lukewarm.

It was not even a shame, but the fact that, having traveled thousands of kilometers across our burnt and war-torn homeland, we found ourselves in a world that had lived through these years, perhaps not in luxury, but in relative satiety. Neat cities, well-fed villages, decently dressed people. I can vouch: all this surprised Georgy Konstantinovich and was alien to him, like the lisping speech that was heard in the streets when we had to leisurely drive through settlements. No, they did not meet us in Poland with bread and salt, the ladies did not ask. They made do with their own."

A sightseeing tour of the liberated regions of Poland was made by the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine N.S. Khrushchev, who also did not fail to note: "Comparing the destroyed Kyiv, Kharkov, cities and mines of Donbass, Poltava with the fact that

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what I noticed here, I came to the conclusion that Poland "got off" quite lightly, with the exception of Warsaw.

But about the fact that they "managed their own", Sasha Buchin lied, because, along with the entire crowded front, he chewed Polish bread, harvested by Polish peasants on Polish soil. One of the first laws adopted by the Lublin Committee back in August 1944 were decrees on the mandatory supply of potatoes, cereals, meat, milk, and hay "for the state". At the same time, obligations were signed to supply the Red Army with food and other necessary materials (for example, the grain plan for 1944 initially "weighed" 530 thousand tons, then at the request of the Poles it was reduced to 380 thousand) according to procurement prices set by local authorities in Polish currency. As a rule, when purchasing, they were guided by the prices prevailing under the Germans; a little bit later

received an order to pay 10% more than the "fascists". Zloty "in the amount necessary for the maintenance of the Red Army" was provided by the Polish side. The Soviet command also received the right, if necessary, to requisition property "from the local population and private firms" and the forced mobilization of men liable for military service and

women on behalf and on behalf of the National Liberation Committee, which had neither authority nor real power.

The Soviet rear services, commandant's offices and political agencies carried out "broad mass explanatory work" in all voivodships, urging the peasants to fulfill the government task steadily and ahead of schedule. And, lo and behold, writes General N.A. Antipenko:

"Thousands of tons of bread and other products began to arrive at receiving points. The decree obligated the peasants to deliver everything by their own transport, but we did not refuse motor transport if we asked for it. However, this did not happen so often: the peasants were grouped into convoy columns and, under a fluttering red flag, solemnly followed the surrender points. On December 15, 1944, in an order for the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, the front commander

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Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov expressed gratitude to a large group of generals and officers for the complete completion of food procurement, which should have been enough until the new harvest.

Indeed, the majority of the population was loyal and friendly towards the Red Army. This friendship was based on the understanding that without the help of the Soviet troops the liberation of the country is impossible, and hatred for the common enemy — the Germans. At the same time, the Poles were frightened by the "ghost of communism" that had returned to Europe. Many did not want to recognize the "democratic government" brought from Moscow and the "social transformations" it initiated, the separation from Poland of the "sprouts" - Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, the disarmament of the Home Army detachments, after five years of struggle with the Nazis who suddenly turned out to be "gangs". In short, Polish society, from the point of view of a Soviet person, was littered with "hostile elements" and "reactionary circles."

"On the territory of Poland," recalls General I.T. Korovnikov, "warriors faced capitalist reality, a hostile ideology, and a way of life alien to Soviet people."

General K.F. Telegin: "Now it was clear to everyone that hostile elements were also disguised in the shouting crowds of the liberated people, ready to use both slander and weapons at any moment."

But General K.V. Krainyukov: "Polish reaction met with hostility to democratic freedoms and social reforms. The class struggle between the landowner-bourgeois reaction and the democratic forces has become especially

I'm sharp. Showed her true face and the so-called

Home Army, which was an armed bulwark of the exploiting classes, international and domestic reaction.

Smersh counterintelligence was engaged in capturing "hostile elements" who violated the orders of the Soviet command to hand over weapons and radios that evaded mobilization and "defensive work", the terms were sculpted for them

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Soviet military tribunals. The Polish military prosecutor's office openly neglected their duties: they say, according to their laws, "military courts do not have the right to try civilians, regardless of what crimes these people have committed." It was these indecisiveness and "flabbiness" of the local authorities - "absurd Polish figures" - in carrying out repressions against compatriots that irritated Zhukov and Telegin:

"The PKNO... is too timid in its approach to resolving the issue of liquidating hostile organizations, drags out the creation of judicial and prosecutorial bodies, weakly applies repression against hostile elements, as if emphasizing by this its weakness and unwillingness to aggravate relations...

It should be noted that the population of Poland still did not feel the firmness of the hand of the PKWN. Not a single serious trial of hostile elements has yet been carried out, no one has been convicted or shot, and this, in the eyes of the population, fueled by the Akovians, is regarded as the weakness and uncertainty of the PKNO itself.

Our man always remembered a firm hand: "Oh, this fatal word "Smersh". It worked flawlessly. We all froze in fear when we heard it." And the Poles still had to study, study and LEARN ...

In the main direction, the Wehrmacht command tried to withdraw its troops to equipped positions along the rivers Bzura, Ravka, Pilica to create a new front of defense, but the rapid advance of the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front frustrated his plans. The 1st Guards Tank Army defeated the enemy's reserve units and pursued their remnants in the Poznan direction.

The 5th Shock and 8th Guards Armies, having crossed the Ravka River, captured Skierniewice and Rawa Mazowiecka by the end of January 17, destroying parts of the Panzer Division of the 40th Corps. The 69th and 33rd armies pursued the enemy at a rate of 25-30 kilometers per day, the tank corps of which approached Pilica in the area of Tomaszow Mazowiecki. The 7th Guards Kavale, brought into battle, also advanced here.

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Russian Corps of General M.P. Konstantinov. As a result of a four-day offensive, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front defeated the main forces of the 9th German Army and advanced 100-130 kilometers deep.

Rifle corps, folding into marching columns, began to pursue. In front of the columns advanced detachments were moving, equipped with a superset of crossing facilities. The rapid advance of the Soviet troops was favored by the frosty weather, which blocked the dirt on the roads. The average daily rate of advance of mechanized formations was 45 kilometers per day, combined arms formations advanced at an average rate of 30 kilometers; "In order not to break away from the enemy, our units used all types of captured transport to the maximum extent: cars, motorcycles, bicycles, wagons, etc." Many captured vehicles were driven by prisoners. All front-line soldiers understood that it was better to pursue a defeated enemy than to knock him out with blood from the next line. And the rear is also happy for the Vikings, although more work is added: "Besides, high rates of advance usually result in huge savings in material resources, and this is easy to prove arithmetically if we calculate the cost of each kilometer of the conquered territory. The hastily retreating enemy does not have time to destroy roads, bridges, and other important objects, and this facilitates the task of restoration - it does not remove it, of course, but only facilitates it, because the enemy managed to blow up almost all bridges of strategic importance in this battle. Finally, high rates of advance yield many trophies, even if partially rendered unusable...

Ultimately, high offensive rates create more favorable conditions for the operational rear than a slow pace, although they require exceptional tension at the culminating moments.

The railway brigades of the Directorate of Military Reconstruction Works followed the military units and army rear areas, restoring the Warsaw-Poznan-Frankfurt highway. This process was preceded by a long



discussion between the Military Council of the Front, the Transport Committee under the State Defense Committee and the People's Commissariat of Railways of the USSR. Military engineers, in order to ensure an uninterrupted supply of the army as they move deeper into Europe, proposed to change the main railways to the Allied gauge. Otherwise, it was required to have a network of transshipment bases, which, in a good way, had to be built on the state border of the USSR in the summer of 1944. The People's Commissariat of Transport objected, arguing that "the lengthening of the railway tracks of the allied gauge to the west will further increase the tension of transportation within the country, especially in connection with the ongoing work to restore the national economy." The "business executives" won the dispute, and the State Defense Committee decided to exploit the Western European gauge in the Liberation Campaign using a captured mobile

composition.

By the end of January 17, the central grouping of the 1st Belorussian Front (5th shock, 8th guards, 1st and 2nd guards tank armies), successfully developing the offensive, was already approaching the main communications and main highways Warsaw-Berlin road.

"Special resistance," notes V.I. Chuikov, our troops did not feel it. In this direction, the main enemy forces were defeated, he does not have large reserves here. there was."

Marshal Zhukov made the following assessment of the situation: "The enemy is currently very weak against 1 BF, and the troops of the front must use this weakness to successfully accomplishment of assigned tasks".

Thus, by the end of January 17, the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, with the assistance of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian and 4th Ukrainian fronts, broke through the enemy defenses in a zone up to 500 kilometers and advanced to a depth of 100-160 kilometers. The main forces of Army Group A were defeated. The commander of the 56th tank corps, General Blok, was killed. Commander of the 17th Panzer Division Colonel Albert Brooks, Commander of the 88th Infantry Division Lieutenant General Graf von Rittberg, Commander

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214th Infantry Division Lieutenant General Kirchbarch were taken prisoner.

The first stage of the operation was extremely successful, and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command specified further tasks.

The 1st Belorussian Front was ordered to capture the Bydgoszcz-Poznan line no later than February 2-4.

The 1st Ukrainian - with the main forces to continue the offensive in the general direction to Breslau, no later than January 30, reach the Oder and seize bridgeheads on its western bank. The left-flank armies of the 59th and 61st armies were to capture Krakow no later than January 20-22 and continue the offensive with the aim of capturing the Silesian industrial region. Initially, Krakow was supposed to take the 4th Ukrainian Front, but General Petrov did not work out, his armies were increasingly lagging behind their neighbors. Therefore, part of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian had to be redirected South.

Meanwhile, Hitler arranged a "debriefing".

On January 17, General Harpe, blamed for the disaster on the Vistula, was removed from command of Army Group A. In his place was appointed the strong-willed and energetic Colonel-General Friedrich Schörner, who earned himself the fame of a master of defensive operations and one of the most cruel commanders. Moreover, the "people's general" was very sympathetic to the revolutionary ideas of National Socialism, and due to his petty-bourgeois origin, he was far from the representatives of the Prussian military aristocracy who irritated Hitler. Schörner carried out the orders of the Fuhrer without question. Such, for example, was one of his orders

Lieutenant General Walter Challe de Beaulieu should be informed that he is obliged to restore his own honor and the honor of his division by a courageous act. Otherwise, I will expel him from the army in disgrace. Moreover, by 9 p.m., he must report which commanders he has already shot or ordered to be shot for cowardice. Elsewhere he wrote: "Weak natures should know that the command has

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enough forces and means to punish them according to the laws of war for the lack of proper initiative, any violation of duty and cowardice before the enemy. In the decisive clash of worldviews, the life of an individual does not play any role ... From each I demand the manifestation of fanaticism and nothing more.

Dr. Goebbels was so simply delighted with this commander: "Schörner is a real commander. The fact that he reports to me in detail about his methods of raising morale is simply magnificent and testifies not only to his broad political outlook. He works with completely new, modern methods. He is not a general behind a desk and a military map; he spends most of his time in combat units with which he has established relations, although strict, but nonetheless based on trust. In particular, he targeted soldiers lagging behind their units. He refers to them those soldiers who, in a critical situation, always strive to lag behind the troops and disappear under some pretext in the rear. He treats such persons rather cruelly, forcing them to hang them on the nearest tree and attach a shield with the inscription: "I am a deserter who refused to protect German women and children."

From the soldiers, Schörner was given the nicknames "terrorist" and "imperial field gendarme." It seems that this was the only commander in the Wehrmacht who, after the war, was accused of war crimes by his own subordinates. In his new post, he began by removing the commander of the 9th Army, Smilo von Luttwitz, on the pretext that on the day Warsaw was abandoned, his orders were "not clear enough and categorical." General of the Infantry Theodor Busse was placed at the head of the army.

Further, considering the story of the abandonment of Warsaw as outright sabotage, Hitler on the evening of January 18 ordered the arrest and investigation of the "treacherous" activities of three senior officers of the OKH operational department responsible for compiling reports and orders on the Eastern Front, including the head of the department, Colonel von Bonin. After another stormy explanation between the Fuhrer,

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rushing to "punish the General Staff", and Guderian, who tried to defend his employees, the general also had to go to Prinz-Albrechtstrasse. Therefore, at the most critical moment of the battle on the Vistula, the Chief of the General Staff of the Land Forces spent interesting time in the Reich Security Office, testifying to Ernst Kaltenbrunner and the Gestapo to Müller. Guderian managed to secure the release of two officers, although they were sent to the front as regimental commanders, while von Bonin was forced to go to concentration camps until the end of the war. The commander of the 46th Panzer Corps, General Walter Fries, holder of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords, was removed from command for retreating from Warsaw and brought to trial by a military tribunal.

Finally, the Fuhrer finally decided to "steer" the fighting on his own, guided not by the considerations of the generals, but by his own "insights". From now on - no amateur performance!

On January 19, he issued an order for the armed forces, according to which any military leader, up to and including the commander of a division, was personally responsible to the Supreme Commander for any movement of his troops, whether offensive or retreat: "In

In all cases listed, it is necessary to report in advance so that I have the opportunity to intervene in the final decision and so that in the event that I give a possible counter-order, the latter can be brought to the attention of the troops in a timely manner. The main duty "in conditions of heavy fighting" became to monitor the safety of communications, and all attempts to justify their actions by their absence or to hide the "bare truth" in reports from now on entailed draconian penalties. On this occasion, Field Marshal von Rundstedt once remarked that the only soldiers he can dispose of at his own discretion are those who guard the doors of his office.

While the court and the case, the new command of Army Group "A" expected to gain a foothold on the defensive lines prepared in the depths. The troops of the 9th Army were to hold the line between Lodz and the Vistula, and the right flank on

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carry out a counterattack in a southerly direction. The 4th Panzer Army was tasked with stopping the Russians advancing on Breslau, west of Czystochowa. The 17th Army was responsible for Upper Silesia. True, the command of the 4th Panzer Army really had at hand two incomplete divisions and one and a half brigades, the rest of the formations, including the remnants of the 24th Panzer Corps, were somewhere in "wandering boilers" and made their way to the north-west to parallel courses with the Soviet tankers, who were still ahead in this race.

General Schörner barely had time to send out his order to the addressees, when on January 19 the cities of Lodz and Krakow were abandoned by German troops.

As for Lodz, the formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army, aimed at Poznan, simply bypassed it. The two divisions of the "Grossdeutschland" corps that had arrived by that moment could not rectify the situation: they had to unload in an open field under the fire of Russian artillery and wage defensive battles. The city was occupied by the 82nd Guards Rifle Division, Major General G.I. Khetagurov.

Krakow was prepared for a long and stubborn defense: three bypasses were built around the city with a developed system of trenches, cut-off positions, anti-tank ditches, long-term firing points, minefields and other obstacles - everything was as it should be. Reinforced concrete gouges and barricades were installed on the streets, many objects were mined, and with imagination: "The troops met with a new type of anti-tank barriers, which the Nazis called pylons. The pylons were massive reinforced concrete pipes of two meters in cross section and four meters in height; a charge was laid under their soles, which exploded along the wires from the "control room". This method of barricading was convenient for the enemy, since the streets were not blocked until the last minute, and the standing pillars did not arouse the suspicions of the civilian population, being similar to the devices of the city economy. The Nazis set up pylons on sidewalks and roadsides; firing points with embrasures were built nearby, flush with the fallen pylon."

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However, the "heroic defense" failed. By the morning of January 19, the divisions of the 59th Army of Korovnikov captured Krakow from the north and northeast, the formations of the 60th Army of Kurochkin from the east and southeast, the brigades of the 4th Guards Tank Corps bypassed the city from the west. The garrison had one road open to the south, and the Germans hurried to use it. Marshal Konev, who personally led the assault, counted on this: "In this case, we did not set ourselves the task of cutting off the last escape route of the Nazis. If we had done this, then we would have had to root them out for a long time, and we would undoubtedly have destroyed the city. As tempting as it was to create a ring of encirclement, although we had such an opportunity, we did not go for it. Having put the enemy in front of a real threat of envelopment, our troops kicked him out of the city with a direct blow from the infantry and tanks. By evening, the general's troops

Korovnikov, destroying the rearguards of the enemy, went through the whole city through and through ... "The ancient capital of Poland was taken safe and sound.

On the same day, the 56th Guards Tank Brigade, the vanguard of the 7th Guards Tank Corps, and the 53rd Guards Tank Brigade, the vanguard of the 6th Guards Tank Corps, crossed the German border and captured the first German settlements - Nalgemsbrück and Pitschen. On January 20, units of the 5th Guards Army crossed the border and, advancing 20 kilometers, captured the city of Rosenberg.

In the border areas, enemy resistance increased sharply: on the one hand, the front of the Soviet offensive was expanding, on the other hand, German troops were being brought up from other sectors of the front. From January 18 to 20, the 20th (78 tanks) and 8th (91 tanks) Panzer Divisions arrived in Silesia from Hungary, and the 712th Infantry Division from the West; East of Breslau, the 269th Infantry Division and the 405th People's Artillery Corps were unloaded. In addition, the German grouping was reinforced by formations retreating from the Vistula. So, joining forces, they made their way to their 24th tank corps of Neringa and the corps "Grossdeutschland". The pace of the Soviet offensive slowed down.

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The fall of Krakow opened the way to the industrial regions of Upper Silesia, the capture of which was the most important task of the front. Here, in a relatively small area, almost adjacent to each other, there were such industrial cities as Katowice, Dźbrowa Gurnicza, Sosnowiec, Beiten, Gleiwitz and others. There were several hundred different enterprises here, including military factories, dozens of mines, iron and zinc mines, blast furnaces, metallurgical and chemical enterprises. All these factories and mines were outside the Allied aviation area and continued to operate at full capacity, compensating the Germans for the bombed Ruhr. The main line of defense on the approaches to the Silesian region ran along the western bank of the Pshemsha River and its tributaries. The dominating coast contributed to the creation of a solid positional defense, while the open swampy floodplains of the eastern coast made it difficult for Soviet troops not only to cross, but also to approach them. All settlements were turned into "fortresses".

Thinking about the plan for taking the Silesian industrial region, estimating the opposing enemy forces at 9 infantry and 2 tank divisions, not counting individual battalions and battle groups (about 100 thousand people), Marshal Konev developed the following disposition. On January 20, he ordered a sharp change in the direction of movement of the 3rd Guards Tank Army. General Rybalko had to turn his "boxes" 90 degrees and instead of Breslau go south to the city of Oppeln (where the headquarters of Army Group A was located), cutting off the escape routes of German troops operating against Zhadov's army, in further: "With the crossing of the 5th Guards Army of the river. Oder to be ready to force the river through the crossings of the 5th Guards Army. Oder for a further offensive to the west. Fresh 21st Army (55th, 117th, 118th Rifle Corps) of General Gusev, reinforced by the 31st Tank Corps of Major General G.G. Kuznetsov and | - m Guards Cavalry Corps, Major General V.K. Baranova, struck at Beiten, covering the Silesian region from the north and northwest; 59th Army with 4th Guards Tank

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with a corps continued the offensive on Katowice; The 60th Army advanced along the Vistula, entering from South.

At dawn on January 21, the 3rd Guards Tank Army launched an attack in a new direction. Fearing encirclement, the German troops, still continuing to resist in front of the front of the 5th Guards Army, began to withdraw their forces behind the Oder.

"When I met the newly appointed commander of Army Group A in Oppeln on January 21, 1945," Speer recalls, "he informed me that only one name remained of it: tanks and heavy weapons were destroyed in a losing battle. No one really knew how far

Soviet troops advanced in the direction of Oppeln. In any case, the officers fled from the headquarters, and only a few people remained in our hotel, who decided to spend the night here."

By the end of January 23, the divisions of General Zhadov broke through to the Oder, together with tankers occupied Oppeln and, having laid wooden decks on the ice, in continuous fog "relatively calmly" captured the first bridgehead on the western coast measuring 22 by 5 kilometers. To the north, the 78th rifle corps of the Koroteev army made its way to the river, and to the south, the 21st army of Gusev. The next day, the forward detachments of the 4th Panzer Army also broke out to the Oder and proceeded to cross it north of Breslau; behind Lelyushenko's corps, the divisions of General Pukhov were pulled up. The offensive impulse was great, everyone understood that the Oder was a symbolic milestone, and "everyone knew about the instruction of the Supreme High Command about the presentation of those who especially distinguished themselves during the forcing of the Oder to the title of Hero of the Soviet Union." In the 4th Tank Brigade, the 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Churilov, who on January 25 crossed the river on improvised means in the Keben area, north of Steinau, and ensured the crossing of the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps. In the combat annals of the brigade, there are 30 Heroes, of which 16 are the Zaoder bridgehead.

As a result, on January 22-76, the armies of the main grouping of the 1st Ukrainian Front almost in a 200-kilometer strip

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marched on the Oder, crossed it and seized bridgeheads in the areas of Steinau, Brig and Olpeln, for the expansion of which a fierce struggle unfolded.

True, the withdrawal of the tank army from the offensive zone of the 52nd Army complicated the struggle for Breslau. Attempts by the infantry to break through the outer defensive contour on the move ended in failure. From the assault on the city, which was practically not affected by the war, since the allied aviation did not reach here, Konev decided to refuse for the time being, ordering methodical fire with heavy artillery. Hitler, as usual, declared Breslau a fortress. The garrisons of the "fortresses", not thinking of breaking out of the encirclement, had to fight to the last soldier, pinning down as many Soviet troops as possible by besieging large and small fortified points. The commandant was Major General Krause. As a political commissar, the "energetic National Socialist leader" Gauleiter Karl Hanke raged in the city, among other disciplinary measures, he sentenced the mayor of the city to death "for defeatism".

In Breslau, where about a million people had accumulated, an urgent evacuation of the entire civilian population unfit for military service was announced. Trains and buses could not ensure the removal of such a large number of people. Due to the lack of transport, the bulk of the refugees, following the "order of the party", left the city on foot. Their way to the west along snow-covered roads in twenty degrees of frost was littered with thousands of corpses of frozen children and old people. But most of all, those who tried to escape on steamboats were unlucky - they were shot from the shore by Soviet tanks: "An interesting incident occurred that day, which showed that the enemy did not expect such a quick exit of our units to the Oder. From the side of Breslau, a cargo steamer appeared on the river ... The commander of the tank regiment I.A. Tkachuk, having disguised the tanks, ambushed them. The ship was approaching, the team suspected nothing. On a prearranged signal, 2 tanks opened fire. After 3 minutes, the steamer, engulfed in flames, carried down the river. After 2 hours, a second steamer approached, and the same thing happened to them. Lelyushenko,

describing this

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"an interesting case", rather hesitantly, reports that the steamers following from Breslau were, "apparently, with military equipment." One involuntarily recalls August 23, 1942: German tanks from the banks of the Volga shoot the same steamers.

In the meantime, on the night of January 23, General Rybalko received a new task: advancing to the southeast, "by noon on 24.1.45, with the main forces to capture the areas of Gleiwitz, Rybnik, Nikolai" and, together with the 21st, 59th and 60th armies encircle and destroy the Silesian enemy grouping. From the text of the directive, it can be seen that from the previous successes at the command of the front, the cap completely slid down: in fact, the tank army was supposed to rush about 100 kilometers in twelve hours through forests, overcoming river barriers, mined areas and increasing enemy resistance. But an order is an order, the march began at dawn. The 7th Guards Tank and 9th Mechanized Corps followed in the first echelon; The 6th Guards Tank Corps was withdrawn to the second echelon. Nearly 300 combat vehicles were out of order by that time (irretrievably - 61), but something remained - 438 serviceable tanks and 200 self-propelled guns. Parallel to the 3rd Guards Tank Army, the 31st Tank Corps was advancing. During the day of January 24, the tankers fought 50-60 kilometers.

Advancing along the eastern bank of the Oder, the 7th Guards Tank Corps, Major General S.A. Ivanov after crossing the river Klodnitsa was drawn into the forest. The advance was slow: the terrain was hindered by the enemy, who skillfully used its features, attacked from ambushes and mined the roads. Overcoming the 30-kilometer forest continued for another two days. In this regard, Rybalko wrote to the corps command:

"My boss, like me, does not find words for indignation at such trampling. As if we are giving the enemy time on purpose to evacuate the Silesian industrial region and to organize a defense. You have to understand that you don't fight in a column in the forest. Unas always turns out well when we do not meet any resistance, but as soon as we have an insignificant

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enemy forces, we stop on the spot. I haven't recognized you for the last two days... Keep in mind that if we don't take Rybnik today, all our previous work will go down the drain."

Only on January 27, the brigades of the 7th Corps reached Rybnik, where they got stuck in street battles: "... the enemy sat down in stone houses and fettered all the forces of the corps. By the end of the day, the corps did not capture the city and did not maneuver around to block it and cut off the road to Ratibor.

Moving to the left of the 9th Kiev-Zhytomyr mechanized corps, Lieutenant General I.P. Sukhov, together with the 31st Panzer Corps, captured the city of Gleiwitz on January 24, but did not advance further, "fighting with the enemy in occupied positions." This prompted General Rybalko to commit the 6th Guards Tank Corps into battle, which was ordered to reach the western outskirts of Katowice by the morning of January 27th. Parts of the 59th Army and the 4th Guards Kantemirovskiy Tank Corps were moving towards him. On January 27, the 60th Army (15th, 28th, 106th rifle corps) captured Auschwitz, the 9th mechanized corps occupied Nikolai. Pincers were already clearly looming around the German grouping, which included the 20th Panzer, 75th, 344th, 359th, 375th Infantry Divisions, and a regiment of the 10th Panzer Grenadier Division. 25th police regiment and so on.

Konev really wanted to take all this army into a tight ring and grind it into powder, and the order was already given to encircle him. But the marshal remembered in time the November call to Moscow, the conversation in the most important Kremlin Cabinet, the Leader's finger tracing the Silesian region on the map, and the only word He had said: "Gold".

"I understood that if we surrounded the enemy grouping, which numbered 10-12 divisions without reinforcements, and fought against it, then its resistance could drag on for a very long time. Especially if you take into account the area in which it will resist. And that's where all the salt is. The Silesian industrial region is a big nut: its width is 70 and its length is 110 kilometers. This entire territory is completely built up mainly with reinforced concrete structures and massive masonry residential buildings. Pe

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Before us was not one city, but in fact a whole system of cities merged with each other with a total area of 5-6 thousand square kilometers. If the enemy sits here and begins to defend himself, then it will be very difficult to defeat him. Large human losses and destruction are inevitable. The entire area may be in ruins... Having closed the ring as a result of the operation, we will be forced to destroy the entire area, inflict enormous damage on the largest industrial complex..."

Thinking hard, Ivan Stepanovich decided not to surround the enemy, but to scare him and leave him an escape path, to force him "to see in this corridor the only way to salvation." On January 28, he stalled Rybalko's tank army, giving it limited tasks to destroy individual enemy groups in the Rybnik and Nikolai regions. The commanders of the 21st and 59th armies were ordered, on the contrary, to attack with fury. By evening, after three days of fierce street fighting, the 4th Guards Tank Corps and the 245th Rifle Division cleared Katowice of the enemy. Under the strong onslaught of Soviet troops from the front and the threat of a deep detour, the Germans retreated through the "gates" left for THEM in a southwestern direction, to Ratibor.

On January 29, the entire Silesian industrial region was cleared of the enemy.

On this day, the Headquarters approved the plan for the development of the operation proposed by Konev a day earlier. He provided for the defeat of the Breslavl grouping and access to the Elbe on February 25-28, with a simultaneous hit on Berlin.

By the end of January 30, the 59th Army reached the Oder and captured a bridgehead. The 60th Army turned its front to the south. Konev withdrew the tank army from the battlefield to put the materiel in order: from the beginning of the operation, as a result of combat damage and for technical reasons, half of the "thirty-fours" went out of order, 181 combat vehicles were lost forever, and 168 required repair. Losses in personnel - 7.5 thousand people. According to reports, units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army over the same period destroyed about 28 thousand enemy soldiers and officers, 173 tanks and

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72 self-propelled guns, 487 guns and mortars, captured rich trophies and took 3,600 prisoners.

The loss of Upper Silesia inevitably entailed the final collapse of the economy of the Third Reich. On January 30, the Minister of Armaments handed over to Hitler another memorandum:

"I reported to him on the merits that the war was over in the field of economy and armaments, and in this situation the questions of nutrition, heating of residential buildings and power supply have priority in relation to tanks, aircraft engines and ammunition.

In order to refute Hitler's far from reality ideas about the possibilities of the defense industry in 1945, I attached to the memorandum a forecast of the production of tanks, weapons and ammunition for the next three months. From the memorandum one could conclude: "After the loss of Upper Silesia, the German defense industry will no longer be able to at least to some extent cover the needs of the front in ammunition, weapons and tanks. In this case, it will also become impossible to compensate for the superiority of the enemy in technology at the expense of the personal courage of our soldiers.

In the past, Hitler asserted again and again that from the moment a German soldier starts fighting on German soil, defending his homeland, his miracles of heroism will balance our weakness. I wanted to answer this in my memorandum."

The Fuhrer ordered to hide the "paper" in a safe and not show it to anyone, for some time now he preferred to ignore the bad news.

The right-flank 3rd Guards Army advanced more slowly than others. The strip at the junction of two fronts became the main route of retreat to the west for the German divisions defeated on the Vistula, including those driven back to the south by the blows of the armies of Marshal Zhukov. Therefore, by January 26, combat groups formed from the remnants of the 6th, 214th infantry divisions, Volkssturm detachments,

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units and subunits of the 16th, 17th, 19th, 25th Panzer, 10th, 20th Panzergrenadier Divisions and the Brandenburg Division, the remnants of the 42nd Army Corps, units of the 168th Infantry and 603rd Divisions special purpose.

By the end of January 28, the left-flank 76th Rifle Corps of the 3rd Guards Army reached the Oder and two regiments of the 389th Rifle Division crossed the river using improvised means and wedged into the enemy defenses for 5 kilometers. The next day, two rifle divisions crossed to the western coast.

In order to eliminate the Soviet bridgehead, the German command decided to use the troops accumulated on the eastern bank of the Oder from the battle groups retreating from the Vistula. K. On January 29, it concentrated two strong groups: one in the area of Lisa, the other in the area of Gurau. The first of them, as part of units of the 56th Tank and 42nd Infantry Corps, the assault regiment of the 4th Tank Army, the 21st Assault Gun Brigade, had the task of holding Lisa behind them in order to ensure the withdrawal of the remnants of various troops beyond the Oder. formations and thus gain time for them to occupy a solid defense on the western bank of the river. The second grouping with a total strength of 10-12 thousand people under the command of General von Saucken consisted of the tank corps "Grossdeutschland", two infantry divisions, units of the Volkssturm and artillery. It was supposed to strike from Gurau to the south and cut off parts of the 76th Rifle Corps of Major General N.I. Glukhov, who operated on the bridgehead they captured.

Intense fighting on the entire front of the 3rd Guards Army went on for four days. The von Saucken group managed to push back the 120th Rifle Corps and part of the forces to break through to the Gross-Osten area. The situation became threatening. In order to maintain a bridgehead across the Oder and ensure the actions of the 76th corps, General Gorlov brought into the battle from the second echelon the 21st Rifle Corps, which, as a result of a tense battle, drove the enemy out of Gurau and advanced towards Gross-Osten. On January 30, on the right flank of the army, the 120th Rifle Corps defeated the Lisskaya group of Germans and, continuing

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offensive in a western direction, went to the city of Fraustadt. The 21st Corps, in cooperation with units of the 76th Rifle Corps and three brigades of the 4th Tank Army, completely eliminated the German grouping in the Gross-Osten area and restored the situation.

Marshal Konev rushed to Lelyushenko's command post and assigned the 4th Panzer Army the task of attacking on both banks of the river in a northwestern direction in order to help Gordov and, by the joint efforts of the two armies, destroy enemy units east of the Oder.

However, it was not possible to complete this task to the end: although with heavy losses, the Germans left for the western coast. Here, scattered units and single soldiers were sent to assembly points, "brought to life" and put back in line:

"During the retreat, several dozen of our comrades were arrested. At the battalion command post, they were lined up and one in ten was sentenced to death by a field court. To carry out the sentence, the condemned were sent to the regiment, the rest - again to the front. And one soldier, sentenced to death for cowardice, was immediately shot. His last words were: "Long live Germany, long live



Fuhrer! But he couldn't save his head. When, after the volley, he fell to his knees, but was still alive, the chief lieutenant who commanded the execution made a control shot in the temple.

On January 30, the main forces of General Gordov reached Oler, and on February 4, Steinau fell.

During the first week of February, combined-arms armies were fighting to expand, unite and hold the captured bridgeheads, and were engaged in the liquidation of encircled groupings. At the same time, rear units and institutions were pulled up to the Oder.

During the Sandomierz-Silesian Offensive, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front took 43,000 prisoners and destroyed, "according to ours," that is, Konev, rather arbitrary estimates, over 150,000 soldiers and officers.

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Tserov: "Among the captured trophies were more than 5,000 guns and mortars, more than 300 tanks, 200 aircraft, a large number of other weapons and equipment." In his memoirs, the marshal was "shy": it was reported to Moscow that the front had destroyed up to 280,000 Nazis and captured 60,000, which, taking into account the wounded, should mean the complete "liquidation" of Army Group A.

Own losses before February 3 amounted to [16 thousand people killed and wounded.

On February 4, General Schörner reported to Hitler: "My Fuhrer! I can report that the first onslaught of the Soviet big offensive on the front of Army Group Center was largely stopped. The front is still under pressure in many sectors, but in others we are undertaking local counterattacks."

The 1st Belorussian Front pursued the enemy in the Poznań direction. Attempts by the German command to organize the defense of the Wart line were unsuccessful. The Soviet tank armies overcame it on the move already on January 20th. Two days later, the Wart line was overcome by combined arms armies. By this time, the mobile units were 80–100 kilometers ahead.

On January 23, units of the 2nd Guards Tank Army and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps captured the city of Bydgoszcz.

Troops of the 1st Guards Tank Army began fighting for Poznan. But here the enemy managed to organize the defense of the most important directions and road junctions, and the forces of the garrison were estimated at 60 thousand people. It did not work out to take the city from a sloop, and General Katukov, having reported to the front commander about the inexpediency of storming Poznan, received permission, leaving the barriers, to move further:

"By January 1945, we had accumulated enough experience to learn the truth - the liberation of settlements

,NOT the main task of the tank troops. Cut off enemy communications, bring chaos to his defenses, cause panic in the rear, block the escape routes of his advanced units

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or ways to transfer its reserves - this is the task that we set in the first place ...

Poznan was a typical tank "gas chamber". On its narrow streets, well prepared for defense, the Germans would have knocked out all our vehicles. I ordered A.Kh. Babajanyan and I.F. Dremov to bypass Poznan from the north and south, closing the ring, cutting off all communications and preventing the Nazi garrison from leaving to the west. On January 25, the brigades of both corps crossed the Warta for the third time and surrounded Posen. Around the city, tankers I.F. Dremov captured several airfields, on which there was a huge number of aircraft.

Katukovtsy rushed west, to the city of Kustrin on the Oder. The task of defeating the Poznan garrison was entrusted to the 29th Rifle Corps of the 8th Guards and the 91st Rifle Corps of the 69th Army. The remaining formations of both armies continued to pursue the enemy. The capture of Poznan was personally entrusted to V.I. Chuikov.

Around the city, the Germans erected two defensive bypasses. The outer one, which ran 4–6 kilometers from the city limits, consisted of three lines of trenches, a developed system of communications and cut-off positions, numerous pillboxes and bunkers, sites for anti-tank guns, echeloned in depth and covered with minefields. Tank-accessible directions were covered by ditches 4-5 meters deep and 6-8 meters wide.

On the inner bypass, there were 18 forts and 54 pillboxes, interconnected by underground passages. Forts have existed here since the end of the last century, but then they underwent modernization taking into account the new conditions of the war. Each of them had the shape of a polygon with an area of 4500-8000 square meters and was a two-three-story underground-ground structure with brick walls and earth-brick vaults with a total thickness of up to 4 meters. From the outside, the forts were surrounded by ditches 10 meters wide and up to 3 meters deep with brick walls, ramparts and metal fences. In the breaks of the ditch there were casemates with many loopholes, from which the ditch was shot through.

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dagger gun fire. In the so-called courtyard of each of the forts, there were up to 5 reinforced concrete pillboxes or armor caps, well-equipped mine positions and machine gun platforms. The garrison numbered from 150 to 600 people. All forts and pillboxes were linked to each other and the ancient Citadel located behind them by a single fire system: the garrison of a blockaded fort could call upon itself the fire of neighboring forts. In the residential part of the city, most residential buildings, factory buildings adapted in advance to all-round defense.

Above all the buildings of Poznan, with its massive ravelins, redoubts and towers, the Citadel towered. The pentagon of the fortress was surrounded by a moat 10–12 meters wide and 8 meters deep. Behind the moat rose an earthen rampart 6-7 meters high and 12 meters thick at the base. From numerous loopholes and embrasures arranged in the walls of buildings, towers, redoubts, ravelins, all the faces of the ditch and the approaches to it were shot through with frontal and flanking fire. The main entrance to the fortress on the south side - the iron gates - was covered by fire from three towers and four redoubts with numerous loopholes. In the courtyard, the defense was strengthened by reinforced concrete caps and shields.

In a word, Poznań was a fortress not only in name.

True, the combat effectiveness of the garrison, the core of which was 2000 cadets of the cadet school, was estimated by the German command rather low and did not have high hopes for its long-term resistance, God forbid, to hold out for five days. Marshal Zhukov also did not take the fortress seriously, because the Germans fled everywhere. Therefore, he gave Chuikov one day to take Poznan. As Vasily Ivanovich recalls: "We did not attack from the west. We deliberately left an exit here, hoping that the enemy would use it and move out of the fortress. But the calculations did not come true: the garrison, commanded by the "hardened Nazi" Colonel Gonell, was not going to leave the city and, having rejected the Soviet Ultimatum, resisted fiercely. Assault with the use of artillery of large and special power, 1000-kilogram

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heavy bombs, heavy tanks, flamethrowers, with street battles in the spirit of Stalingrad, Zhukov's "sophisticatedly artistic" swearing against Chuikov and Chuikov—lower recipients, heavy losses (only in Khetagurov's division three regiment commanders were killed), lasted a month. Poznań fell on 23 February. The remnants of the garrison capitulated, Ernst Gonnell, who managed to become a general, shot himself.

Having captured Bydgoszcz, Poznań, the 1st Belorussian Front fulfilled the task set by the directive of the Headquarters a week ahead of schedule. Planning further actions, the commander planned to reach the line of Berlinchen, Landsberg, Grodzik by January 30, pull up the rear, replenish supplies and resume the offensive on February 1-2 in order to force the Oder on the move and develop a rapid advance on Berlin.

On January 25, Marshal Stalin called Marshal Zhukov. He noted that with the entry to the Oder, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front would break away from the units of the 2nd Belorussian Front by more than 150 kilometers. The Supreme Commander declared that it was necessary to wait ten days until Marshal Rokossovsky completed the East Prussian operation and crossed the Vistula. Zhukov, who had already drawn arrows of "swift strikes" around the capital of the Reich, promised to deploy the right wing of the front to the north and asked not to stop the run of his armies - the enemy was demoralized, unable to offer serious resistance, he should not be allowed to gain a foothold.

In order to close the 500-kilometer gap in the Eastern Front and prevent German troops from reaching the rear on the lower reaches of the Vistula, General Guderian proposed the creation of a new army group between Group Center and Group A. Field Marshal Maximilian von Weichs was nominated for the post of commander of the General Staff. However, on January 25, Hitler at the head of the newly formed Army Group "Vistula" decided to appoint an ideologically impeccable commander, a true Aryan, the owner of the correct skull, the Grand Grand Master of the Black Order - SS Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler.

Guderian was horrified: "I used all my red

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chie to protect the ill-fated Eastern Front from this nonsense. But it was all in vain. Hitler claimed that Himmler had done his job very well on the Upper Rhine. With a reserve army at hand, he would quickly be able to use it. Therefore, he is the best to provide the new front with both soldiers and equipment. An attempt to at least transfer the well-functioning Weichs headquarters to the Reichsfuehrer SS also failed. Hitler ordered Himmler to select his own headquarters. He appointed the gallant SS Brigadefuehrer Lammerding, who up to that time had commanded an SS Panzer Division, as Chief of Staff. This man had no idea about the severity of staff work in the army group being formed.

According to Butlar, one of the reasons that prompted Hitler to such a strange appointment was the belief that "Faithful Heinrich" had something up his sleeve: "The determining factor in this choice was to a large extent the fact that Hitler knew about the Reichsfuehrer SS warmarmy reserve and spare parts of the SS of some hidden reserves, which could not be reached in any other way. Hitler hoped that in this way he would more quickly be able to use them for the defense of this almost undefended area. This fact very well illustrates the chaos that existed at that time in the top German military leadership, which outwardly looked so authoritarian."

Himmler is an excellent organizer, a man of exceptional energy and efficiency. But, dreaming of receiving the Knight's Cross, he knew little about military affairs; he was the Fuhrer of executioners and punishers. In addition, being one of the top four hierarchs of the Third Reich, Himmler did not report to the Chief of the General Staff of the OKH. The case was quite the opposite.

General Guderian describes his working day as follows:

"I had to go to the Fuhrer twice a day, which was almost the rule in a tense situation—twice from Zossen to Berlin, to the Imperial Chancellery, and back, i.e. four times for 45 minutes, and only three hours. Reports

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Hitler's work lasted two, and mostly three hours, for a total of six hours. Thus, I spent eight or nine hours on reports on the situation at the fronts alone, without doing any useful work at all. Engaged in some conversations, poured from empty to empty. In addition, after the attempt on his life, Hitler demanded that I also be present at the reports of the headquarters of the operational leadership of the armed forces and at the reports of representatives of the armed forces. In a normal situation, this desire of the Fuhrer was, perhaps, LEGAL ...

At that time I was very overworked, so that listening to ordinary speeches for several hours in a row, for example, representatives of the almost paralyzed air and naval forces, was very painful both mentally and physically. Hitler's penchant for uttering lengthy monologues did not decrease even in connection with the deterioration of the military situation in our country, rather the opposite... On those days in which I had to report to the Fuhrer twice a day, I returned to Zossen only in the morning. Often I could lie down for a while only by 6 o'clock in the morning. At 8 o'clock, the officers of the General Staff of the Ground Forces came to the report with the morning reports of the army groups. The reports continued, with breaks for meals, until I was informed that a car was ready to go to the imperial office.

With the appointment of Himmler to the post of commander of the army group, Guderian's life became even more fun. When the Reichsführer SS, who had settled with headquarters "in the woods near Prenzlau", needed advice on military matters, it looked like this: "Himmler called Colonel General Heinz Guderian, Chief of the Army General Staff, by telephone, demanding that he arrived immediately from Zossen."

Army Group "Vistula" included the 2nd and 9d-I field armies.

On January 26, Army Group North was renamed Army Group Courland; from its composition, four infantry (389, 281, 32, 215th) and 4th tan were exported by sea to Pomerania

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and the 3rd SS Panzer Corps with Panzergrenadier Divisions "Nordland" and "Netherlands".

In turn, Army Group Center became Army Group North. Well, Army Group A turned into Group Center, which now consisted of the 17th Field, II and 4th Panzer Armies, commanded by Generals Schultz, Heinrici and Greser. At the same time, Hitler decided to transfer the 6th SS Panzer Army to the Eastern Front. Guderian immediately planned a counterattack with the most decisive goals, but the dreams again did not come true: at the behest of the Fuhrer, the SS army went to Hungary. In addition, it was ordered to form a tank destroyer division. This unit consisted of companies of cyclists armed with faustpatrons and anti-tank mines, commanded by front-line lieutenants who had experience in fighting armored vehicles.

On January 26, the tank armies of the 1st Belorussian Front reached the old German-Polish border, where in 1932-1937 the Germans erected a defensive belt of the so-called "Eastern Wall". It was based on long-term firing points of the "Panzerwerke" type, echeloned in depth, which were two-level reinforced concrete structures with elements of armor protection and machine-gun mounts for all-round firing. The leading edge passed along the slopes of hills covered with forests. natural and artificial

obstacles, like concrete gouges. increased the stability of the defense. In inter-lake spaces and areas where roads cross, strongholds were created with a density of 5-7 pillboxes per kilometer of front. The defense nodes were interconnected by a system of tunnels through which an electric train was supposed to run.

In Katukov's memoirs, the "Eastern Wall" looks like an impregnable frontier on the borders of the Reich: "The Meseritzky fortified area, the main one on the way to Berlin, was re-equipped with the latest engineering technology. A whole city of reinforced concrete and steel with underground railways and power plants, it could accommodate in its bowels

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at least the army. Armored mines went 30-40 meters deep, and on the surface the road was blocked by chains of gouges that stretched for many kilometers. Dozens of low domes of pillboxes bristled with guns and machine guns...

Military history has not yet known examples when a powerful fortified area was broken through by a tank army.

Marshal G.K. Zhukov, who had not read any "history" for a long time, in an effort to prevent the enemy from putting forward reserves and clinging to these "powerful fortifications", instructed tank armies to break through them. Accordingly, General Katukov was supposed to capture strongholds in the Meseritz area by January 28, and General Bogdanov - in Pomerania. Having accomplished the "unprecedented", it was still necessary to seize bridgeheads on the Oder. The tank armies were to be followed by the rifle corps allocated by the combined arms commanders. The order of the front commander No. 00172, in particular, stated:

"If we capture the right bank of the river. Oder, then the operation to capture Berlin will be fully guaranteed."

Of course, armored formations on their own, without artillery and air support and practically without infantry, were not designed to solve such a problem as breaking through a fortified area. But the "trick" was that the "East Wall" was abandoned, partially disarmed, left without artillery and there were no Germans there, except for individual units of the Volkssturm. True, the Reichsführer ordered to advance the administration of the 5th SS mountain corps, recalled from the Balkans, to the Meseritz area, to which he first subordinated the 433rd and 463rd reserve infantry divisions. But what were these divisions!

Katukov, after conferring with headquarters, came to the conclusion that "under other conditions, the order would have seemed impossible," but in the current situation, any of the most difficult tasks "can be done by tankmen." Guderian writes about this period with nostalgia and envy: "The more the Russians became convinced of our weakness, the more resolutely they acted. Their tanks were getting cocky." Indeed, Soviet tanks were everywhere. They saddled the roads, smashed small gar

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nisons, strong knots of resistance flowed around, cut communications, suddenly appeared in the rear...

However, it was not the "daring" tankers who reached the Oder River first, but the advance detachment of the 89th Guards Rifle Division of the 5th Shock Army under the command of Colonel Kh.F. Esipenko. It just so happened. The detachment included the 1006th Rifle Regiment of the 266th Division mounted on Studebakers, the 220th Separate Tank Brigade, the 89th Separate Heavy Tank Regiment, the 507th Anti-Tank Artillery Regiment, and the 360th Separate Self-Propelled Artillery -sky regiment, mortar division and Katyusha division, 303rd guards anti-aircraft artillery regiment and a company of sappers - 90 tanks, including 21 heavy IS, 12 self-propelled guns, 42 guns and mortars, 12 Katyushas. The colonel received the task from the commander

move west and capture a bridgehead northwest of Kustrin in the Kinitza area. The commander of the advance detachment was allocated a powerful front-line radio station of the RAF type.

On January 26, the detachment crossed the Netze River on the move, easily overcame the unoccupied line of fortifications, bypassed the left flank of the 433rd reserve division of General von Lube and saddled the Reichsstrasse No. 1. When there was a shortage of fuel, Colonel Esipenko singled out a strike group consisting of three tank companies, two rifle companies and an anti-tank regiment, gave them all the fuel and, leaving part of the equipment, continued the raid. On the morning of January 31, the group crossed the Oder on the ice and captured a bridgehead on the left bank 4 kilometers along the front and 3 kilometers in depth. In the town of Kinitz, where no one suspected that the Red Army had already entered Germany. A train with six anti-aircraft guns, officers and junkers of the anti-aircraft school was taken from the raid. At 2 p.m., another forward detachment of the 5th shock army, formed from units of the 94th Guards Rifle Division, crossed to the bridgehead. Since there was practically no fuel or ammunition left, it was decided to organize a strong anti-tank unit in Kinitza. The soldiers dug trenches, adapted cellars of stone houses for firing points, dragged

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artillery on the cracked ice. Tanks and guards mortars had to be left on the right bank.

Berlin was less than 70 kilometers away.

The 2nd Guards Tank Army, advancing north of the Netze and Warta rivers, almost unhindered made its way along the forest roads along the chain of Pomeranian Wall strongholds. The main forces of the 1st Mechanized Corps, Major General S.M. Krivosheev and the advanced units of the 9th Guards Tank Corps following behind were on the Oder by the evening of January 31. Motorized riflemen crossed the river, captured Kalentsig and began fighting for Kustrin. Thus, the path to the Oder north of the Warta River was open. However, the 12th Guards Tank Corps, which had the task of capturing the city of Schneidemuhl, got stuck. It was not possible to take the city, it had to be bypassed. But it didn't work out any further. Turning its front to the north, the corps was drawn into protracted battles and suffered heavy losses. For example, in the 49th Guards Tank Brigade, one serviceable tank remained.

Katukov, who was advancing south of Warta, did not go very smoothly. By January 29, the leading 44th Guards Tank Brigade, Colonel I.I. Gusakovsky, together with the 1454th self-propelled artillery regiment of Lieutenant Colonel P.A. Melnikova, having overcome the border river Obra, reached the outskirts of the city of Hochwalde, southwest of Meseritz. Here she met fortifications covered with minefields, barbed wire and gouges. But the Germans showed no signs of life, and the colonel rushed through the snowstorm right along the highway. By the morning of January 31, the brigade captured the area of Tauerzig, Malsov, broke away from the main forces by 50 kilometers and lost contact with the army command. The 11th Guards Tank Corps of Colonel A.Kh. Babajanyan discovered that the same fortifications were already occupied by the enemy. For two days they tested the Panzerveks for strength and made sure that the 85-mm shells of the "thirty-fours" from a distance of 100 meters did not penetrate the walls of the pillboxes. More fortunate was the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps, Major General I.F. Dremova. Its subdivisions are Jan 30

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Varya bypassed the resistance center in Schvibus from the north and successfully advanced to the west. On the night | On February 11, the 11th Guards Tank Corps was withdrawn to the same route, and the entire army began an offensive towards the Oder: the tank corps aimed at Kustrin, the mechanized corps at Frankfurt. The advance was hampered by a lack of fuel and the need to engage in skirmishes with enemy units retreating to the west.

"Fights broke out unexpectedly," recalls A.Kh. Babajanyan, at the crossroads, in the groves. They fired from everywhere: from the left, from the right, from behind—all ideas were mixed up, where was the front, where

rear. Shells flew either in the forehead or in the back. Everyone fought: tankmen and drivers, gunners and repairmen, auto-matchmen and signalmen, anti-aircraft gunners and sappers—the division into “active” and “inactive” bayonets ceased to exist.

There was a front everywhere. Cooks brought in prisoners captured near the field kitchen. Communications officers delivered along with secret documents enemy soldiers and commanders captured along the way. Our corps medical battalion, in order to turn around in one of the settlements, was forced to drive out an enemy sapper company from there. The lightly wounded, doctors, nurses entered the battle - they captured 79 enemy soldiers.

The front commander was extremely dissatisfied with the delay of the tank army and gave General Katukov a uniform dressing:

“All the way, Mikhail Efimovich was nervous. He was clearly out of business. Finally it broke through:

“For no reason at all yesterday, it came from Marshal. Forty-five minutes on the phone scolded. They seem to have reached the Oder on time, but he scolds: “Why are you marking time?” Bogdanov supposedly outran us a long time ago. Yes, if he had bypassed, so what? It's good for them, they didn't have a fortified area, and we had to mess around a lot. Lost two days!

A | February Mikhail Efimovich received from Zhukov a humiliating and boorish “packet” with a note in which he analyzed the reasons for the “failures” of the | th Panzer Army:

“Into Comrade Katukov's own hands, Popel.

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I have reports from especially responsible persons that Comrade Katukov shows complete inactivity, does not lead the army, sits at home with a woman, and that a girl cohabiting with him interferes with his work. Katukov now has no authority in the corps, and even Shalin and the headquarters commanders around Katukov are having very bad conversations.

In parts of Katukov, it seems that it does not happen. The battle of the corps and the army is not organized, as a result of which there have been recent failures in the army.

I require:

- 1) From each of you to give me a true personal explanation on the merits.
- 2) Immediately send a woman from Katukov. If this is not done, I will order her to be exterminated by the SMERSH authorities.
- 3) Katukov to get down to business.

If Katukov does not draw the necessary conclusions for himself, he will be replaced by another commander.”

Of course, it was not a “girl” who cohabited with Zhukov himself, but a specialist specially admitted to the marshal's body - “a thin Russian girl with narrow front shoulder straps of a lieutenant of m / s, with the Order of the Red Star and the medal “For Courage” on a low chest “. She, of course, did not interfere with Georgy Konstantinovich, but quite the opposite: “It was useful - to give powder there, put jars, rub your back, and simply raise your spirits with a kind word.” It is not surprising that soon the wonderful chest of the affectionate, “shy and shy Lidochka” will be decorated with the Order of the Red Banner of War and other military awards.

Like any bigamist, Zhukov was a hypocrite and an implacable fighter against debauchery. Ekaterina Katukova reminded him of this: “Marshal Zhukov had another weakness: he liked to lecture and read morals. I heard more than once how Georgy Konstantinovich scolded the generals for the “bad”

relation to the family. Georgy Konstantinovich himself was not a positive example of a faithful spouse. At the front, he had a woman whom everyone called the "little princess" (a common thing: bribe-takers fight corruption, pedophiles protect

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the rights of children, and a polygamist cannot stand "everyday promiscuity").

That's the insult that the vast majority of Soviet military leaders (yes, the same Popel, who scribbled "objectives" on Katukov) at the front "had a woman", and she did not interfere with them "in work." The only difference is that the widower Katukov did not hide his love and had serious intentions: "Mikhail Efimovich was not ashamed to walk next to me. We always went to the cinema, sat down together at concerts. He threw his greatcoat over my shoulders. He never hid me in a secluded place (for example, in a closet!), as V.I. did. Chuikov, A.I. Eremenko, P.A. Rotmistrov, S.I. Bogdanov and many others, when they found out that the high authorities were coming, they did not want to advertise their relationship with a woman.

According to the foot infantryman, sergeant of the 22nd Infantry Regiment of the 77th Guards Division, Hero of the Soviet Union Alexander Levchuk:

"Only Vanka the platoon leader did not have a field wife, he was painfully not tenacious. A couple of attacks, and there is no platoon. And the company commander's wife was already on the march, maybe not alone. And no one counted at the battalion commander or there at the regiment commander. And there are some girls among us! We are dirty and grimy, in a word, infantry. But it's good, I'll tell you. Otherwise, those girls would have spoiled the whole dumpling for us. Who would fight then?

But even on the front line, not everything is so sad: "The scouts sit in a circle, exchange jokes. Among them is one girl, very beautiful. It is addressed to her with words from which it is POSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT LIFE IN THIS small subdivision flows according to the customs of primitive communism. They have everything in common, and the beautiful Katya, and the cook Natasha, who remained in the rear, are also in common. They give scouts their love ... "

Let's leave to the latest researchers the question of how much THESE "nuances" increased the combat capability of the Red Army.

Just at this time, Sergeant Nikolai Nikulin received another hole in the skin during a reconnaissance search and, habitually rejoicing that the wound does not seem to be very serious, "Lord, my God! How lucky I am! Bones are not broken

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head and belly intact! - went under its own power to the blessed rear:

"Now there are already a lot of our troops around. Some kitchens, workshops, cars. Two well-fed fellows are playing volleyball in the clearing. Deftly pass the ball to one another. Clean, red-cheeked, clean-shaven. And tunics on them without a spot. It's like there is no war.

A striking difference exists between the front line, where blood is shed, where there is suffering, where there is death, where one cannot raise one's head under bullets and shrapnel, where hunger and fear, overwork, heat in summer, frost in winter, where it is impossible to live, - rears. Here, in the rear, another world. The authorities are located here, headquarters are here, heavy guns are located, warehouses, medical battalions are located. Occasionally, shells fly here or a plane drops a bomb. The dead and wounded are rare here. Not a war, but a resort! Those on the front line are not residents. They are doomed. Their salvation is only a wound. Those in the rear will remain alive if they are not moved forward when the ranks of the attackers dry up. They will stay alive, come home, and eventually form the backbone of veterans' organizations. They will grow bellies, get bald heads, decorate their chests with commemorative medals, orders and will tell how heroically they fought, how they defeated Hitler. And they themselves will believe in it! They will bury the bright memory of those who died and who really fought! They



they will present a war about which they themselves know little, in a romantic halo. How good everything was! How beautiful! What heroes we are! And the fact that war is horror, death, hunger, meanness, meanness and meanness will fade into the background. The real front-line soldiers, of which there are one and a half people left, and even those crazy, spoiled ones, will be silent as a rag. And the authorities, who will also largely survive, will wallow in squabbles: who fought well, who fought badly, but if only they had listened to me!

But the most vile role was played by the newspapermen. In the war, they made their capital on corpses, fed on carrion. They sat in the rear, did not answer for anything and wrote articles - slogans with pink water. And after the war, they began to publish books in which they distorted everything, justified everything, completely forgetting

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meanness, abomination and bungling, which formed the basis of front-line life. Instead of honestly sorting out the causes of shortcomings, learning something so as not to repeat what happened in the future, everything was smeared over and varnished. The lessons learned from the war are thus wasted...

In the rear, it's easier to distinguish yourself. They fight and die somewhere on the front line, and the reports are written here."

In the rear, they learned to fight with comfort. Generals, Chekists, party bigwigs, business executives felt a taste for a beautiful life, got used to each other, adapted to make profit from the war, not forgetting to share with higher authorities, special officers and prosecutors, who also wanted to eat decently. Therefore, despite the formidable orders of the People's Commissar of Defense, in the army they stole on an increasing scale - the war will write everything off, if not, we will write it down as "Fritz" on account of reparations. For example, after Zhukov handed over the 1st Ukrainian Front to Konev, the State Control Commission did not dig very deep there. The result of the check was the order of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense No. 230 dated June 19, 1944 "On the squandering of the gift fund in the Office of the Commander of the Armored and Mechanized Forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front and bringing those responsible to

responsibility":

"The deputy commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the front, Major General Petrov, and the assistant commander, Major General Orlovsky, brought about 2 wagons of gifts with food and clothing received from the Mongolian People's Republic to the field front warehouse of armored property, did not credit them and squandered.

By order of Major General Petrov, more than 42 pounds of meat, butter, sausages, sweets, etc. Most of these products were sent by car to Moscow. By his own order, you were given 11 parcels with food weighing up to 4 pounds each freely

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employees of the department and several parcels to strangers.

By order of Major General Orlovsky, 267 kg of pork, 125 kg of lamb and 114 kg of butter were sent by car to Moscow to be handed over to senior officials of the central departments of the commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the Red Army. On the day of the check, these products were not handed over for their intended purpose and were stored in a shed at the apartment of the representative of the Criminal Code by the armored and mechanized troops of the front, Major Dyuzhnik.

In addition, Major General Orlovsky sent 60 kg of butter and 5 goats and other products to Moscow to the employees of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army and his wife.

His subordinate Tarasenko did not lag behind his superior Orlovsky...

By order of the chief of staff of the commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the front, Colonel Maryakhin, the following was issued: to the chief of staff of the commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the Red Army, Major General Salminov - 51 kg of meat, 20 kg of butter, 5 kg of sausage and 10 kg of biscuits; to the head of the 8th department [of the Ukrainian Front, Shakhrai - 5 kg of butter, 3 kg of sausage, 5 kg of biscuits and 3 kg of sweets.

The adjutant of the former commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the front, Captain Fridman, received 278 kg of meat, 147 kg of butter, 90 kg of sausage, 115 kg of cookies, 53 kg of sweets, 108 kg of soap, and in total about a ton of products, of which the family of the former commander the armored and mechanized troops of the front handed over only 180-200 kg of all products.

The same Friedman received, without justification by documents, allegedly for the Mongolian delegation, 205 kg of meat, 20 kg of butter, 25 kg of sausage, 20 kg of sweets, 20 kg of biscuits and 20 kg of soap.

According to the surviving documents, it was established that in the management of the armored and mechanized troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, in a short period of time, they squandered in this way: 15,123 kg of meat, 1,959 kg of sausage, 3,000 kg

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butter, 2100 kg of cookies, 890 kg of sweets, 563 kg of soap, 100 pcs. short fur coats, 100 pcs. overcoats, 80 pcs. fur vests, 100 pairs of felt boots, 100 pairs of boots and other property.

All these disgraceful facts testify to the loss of a sense of responsibility to the state for the preservation of national property among individual senior officials of the armored and mechanized troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, who forgot that the gifts of the Red Army from the population are intended primarily for issuing to soldiers and commanders who especially distinguished themselves in battles with the enemy on the front of the Patriotic War.

Lieutenant General N.A. Novikov. He, according to biographers, had operational talent and "knew the needs of the tankers well", but, apparently, he was not too interested in the question of what kind of bottomholes his deputies were tons of.

offerings are scraped together to be "handed over to the leading employees of the central administrations" and "issued to the command" with delivery to Moscow apartments. It's simple: Petrovich, organize!

In the command part, Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky assigned the military prosecutor of the front the task of "investigating the facts" and bringing to justice General Orlovsky, Colonel Maryakhin, Major Tarasenko, and Captain Fridman.

General Petrov was reprimanded "for using his official position for personal mercenary purposes". General Salmanov was exposed for taking bribes. General Novikov was ordered to hand over everything that was not stolen from food to hospitals "for additional food for the sick and wounded", and to write down the "squandered" clothing property in the certificates of generals and officers who accepted gifts.

In general, everything ended well, as in the Mexican series. Lieutenant General N.A. A month and a half later, Novikov was awarded the rank of Colonel General for the Yassy-Kishinev operation. Major General M.F. Salmanov became commander of the 12th Guards Tank Corps, General

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major I.I. Petrov - lieutenant general. To be honest, I don't know who was actually prosecuted, maybe Captain Friedman? In any case, Major General V.V. Orlovsky in January 1945 remained at his post, after the war he received a lieutenant general and became the head of the TU GBTU. But the greatest career was made by Colonel S.S. Maryakhin: he rose to the rank of army general, commanded the troops of the Belarusian military district, in 1968-1972 he was deputy minister of defense rear. Relatively recently (October 1, 2009), the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper dedicated an article to Sergei Stepanovich and his colleagues under the heading "The rear was headed by the worthy"!

Tirelessly urging his troops on, Zhukov at the same time demanded that the Headquarters hurry up the neighbors:

"... If the left flank of K.K. Rokossovsky will continue to stand still, the enemy will certainly take active actions against the extended right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front.

Please order K.K. Rokossovsky to immediately attack with the 70th Army in the western direction, at least on a ledge behind the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front.

2. I.S. I ask Konev to oblige to quickly reach the river. Oder".

Finally, on February 2, the 40th Guards Tank Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel M.A. Smirnova captured Geritz and entered the battle on the southern outskirts of Kustrin. The 44th Guards Tank Brigade transported motorized infantry and part of the artillery across the Oder south of Geritz. By evening, the bridgehead was expanded along the front to 8 kilometers and to a depth of 6 kilometers.

Chuikov's army was moving to the Oder south of Warta in two corps. The advance was delayed by disparate parts of the enemy, clinging to road junctions, individual settlements and forest arrays. On January 29, the 4th Guards Rifle Corps (35th, 47th, 57th divisions), Lieutenant General Glazunov, crossed the border and entered the battle with the 433rd reserve division, which held a 60-kilometer section across the valley of the Varta River to the north Schwerin. The Germans held out for two days, then their defense was broken through by the Guards.

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soldiers from the front, and the 416th division of the 5th shock army entered the rear with a strike through Landsberg, cutting off the supply and withdrawal routes. General Lube was wounded and taken prisoner.

"To our happiness," recalls V.I. Chuikov, the Nazis of a fresh, fully equipped division who arrived here also, apparently, did not know the location of their fortifications well and therefore could not fully use the power of their fire and the advantage of positions, they fought not particularly skillfully, although stubbornly. If the command of the German division knew the defensive line better and had at least two days to understand the situation and organize a system of fire and interaction, it is difficult to say how things would have turned out for us. Perhaps we would have to fight long battles and suffer heavy losses. The enemy was taken by surprise... On January 31, in one day, our troops almost completely overcame the fortified area and defeated the fresh 15,000-strong division of General Lube.

In fact, the 433rd Infantry Division was a two-regiment training unit of about 4,000 people. Most of the soldiers are semi-qualified older conscripts. The artillery of the "fully equipped division" was represented by six 152 mm and 105 mm howitzers, three 75 mm guns and six 88 mm anti-tank guns. The combat path of the connection turned out to be so short that even in the fundamental work of B. Müller-Gillebrand, a strange thing was written about the division: "Since February 1945, it was marked on the Eastern Front (on cartographic materials). It is not clear whether this refers to the 433rd reserve divisional headquarters of the reserve army, which, together with the units and subunits attached to it, was erroneously designated as the 433rd infantry division, or whether it was the 433rd infantry division formed on the basis of this headquarters." With exactly such "fresh

units that arrived from the west," apparently with the 463rd reserve division, but the 28th Guards Rifle Corps fought less successfully on the left flank of the army.

The 4th Guards Rifle Corps reached the Oder River on the evening of 2 February. From the morning of the next day, units of the 8th

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Guards Army, under the cover of the 16th anti-aircraft artillery division, took bridgeheads from the Katukov brigades south of the bed of the Varta River and occupied new ones.

Even further south, troops of the 69th and 33rd armies entered the Oder.

In early February, intense fighting broke out on the bridgeheads. The enemy began to counterattack almost immediately, throwing everything that was at hand to the front line. Both sides were building up their forces, but the Germans did it faster. The number of aircraft in the 6th Air Fleet was increased to 1830 units, while the airfields of the 16th Air Army were far from the front line. The Soviet artillery lagged behind, the rear lagged behind, heavy tanks and engineering equipment came off, there was a shortage of fuel and ammunition - the provision of them was half a gas station and half a ammunition load. The tank armies turned north. The weather changed dramatically - early spring came, the roads and field airfields became muddy.

The 25th tank-grenadier division arrived in the Kustrin area from the Western Front, attacking Berzarin's divisions on the move. On February 2, the newly formed infantry divisions 303rd "Deberitz" and 309th "Berlin" appeared in the zone of the 5th shock army. All arriving formations were soon merged into the 101st Army Corps under the command of General Wilhelm Berlin.

Against the forward units of Chuikov's two corps (the 29th Guards stormed Poznan), formations of the 5th SS Mountain Rifle Corps — the Ragner division and the Kurmark tank-grenadier division formed "from wheels" — were actively operating. The 21st Panzer Division was on the way.

Attacks were replaced by counterattacks, losses grew. German aviation seized air supremacy and inflicted powerful blows on the columns of Soviet troops, delaying their advance to the Oder (Chief of Staff of the 8th Guards Army, General V.A. Belyavsky, like some kind of "shpak", complains on "barbaric raids by German aircraft").

Marshal Zhukov, still full of optimism, dreaming of putting Hitler in a cage and taking him to Moscow, sent almost gentle telegrams to General Berzarin:

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"To the Military Council of the 5th Shock Army, corps commanders and division commanders of the 5th Shock Army.

The 5th Shock Army was entrusted with a particularly responsible task of holding the captured bridgehead on the western bank of the river. Oder and expand it to at least 20 km along the front and 10-12 km in depth.

I ask all of you to understand the historical responsibility for the fulfillment of the task entrusted to you and, having told your people about this, to demand exceptional stamina and valor from the troops.

Unfortunately, we cannot help you with aviation for the time being, since all the airfields have become limp, and planes cannot take off into the air. The enemy flies from Berlin airfields with concrete runways. I recommend:

1) burrow deep into the ground;

2) organize massive anti-aircraft fire;

3) switch to night action, each time attacking with a limited target;

4) repulse enemy attacks during the day.

2-3 days will pass - the enemy will run out of steam.

I wish you and the troops under your command a historically important success, which you not only can, but must ensure."

By the end of the day on February 3, the 5th shock army formed a solid bridgehead on the left bank of the Oder up to 25 kilometers along the front and from 2 to 7 kilometers in depth. To the north of it, in the area of Neu Blessina, the 82nd Infantry Division of Belov's 61st Army caught on the western coast. To the south, Chuikov's army captured three small Piglets isolated from each other.

At the same time, Zhukov had to pay more and more attention to covering his right flank. As a result of the rapid withdrawal of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front to the Oder and the turn of the main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the north, a gap formed between them, which by January 25 reached 120 kilometers. In addition, the strengthening of the enemy in Pomerania caused concern. From January 27, the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front was provided with troops

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47th and 61st armies (the 82nd division that captured the bridgehead was transferred to Berzarin) and formations of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps. To cover from the north, on January 29, the 1st Army of the Polish Army was brought into battle, and on January 31, the 3rd shock army of General N.P. Simonyak (12th Guards, 7th, 79th Rifle Corps).

Leading the offensive to the north, the troops of the 47th and 61st Armies, in cooperation with the 12th Guards Tank Corps, blocked the enemy in Schneidemühl on February 1, but they could not take the city, in which a strong garrison was stationed, supplied by transport aircraft. . Formations of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 47th Army and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps completed the breakthrough of the positions of the Pomeranian Wall and deployed battles to the west of it. By February 3, the armies of the right wing of the front reached the line north of Bydgoszcz, Arnswalde, Zeden.

With the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the Oder, the threat of an enemy counterattack from the north increased. Therefore, on February 1, for actions in this direction, the front commander deployed the 2nd Guards, and the next day the 1st Guards Tank Army. From February 3, the Pomeranian grouping of the enemy was opposed by four combined arms, two tank armies and a cavalry corps, which, repelling numerous enemy attacks, stubbornly advanced north. Four combined-arms armies, two tank and one cavalry corps remained in the Berlin direction.

It seemed that Berlin was within easy reach - an hour's drive by car. But the elbow is close, but you won't bite.

First, Soviet strategists underestimated the Reich's ability to resist. Due to the transfer of troops, the Germans managed to restore the front along the Oder and organize a new line of defense between the Oder and the Vistula.

Secondly, a supply crisis suddenly arose on the 1st Belorussian Front.

At the cost of incredible efforts, literally in ten days - by January 29 - the Soviet railway brigades and the mobilized Polish population restored the Warsaw railway bridge and the 300-kilometer double-track railway.

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stral to Poznan, built transshipment bases at the Warsaw-Zapadnaya station and in the Deblin area. It was a real victory for the rear. But it was on this day that the GKO suddenly

"changed his mind" and ordered to immediately start changing this direction to the allied track: smoke - into the chimney, firewood - into the original one. Everything had to be taken apart and started over. Moreover, the scope of work increased manifold: in Europe, the rails were fastened not with crutches, but were screwed on with screws, in a number of sections they were generally welded to metal sleepers. The Polish peasants were especially delighted, who in practice comprehended the principles of socialist planning: "On other days, more than 10 thousand Polish citizens went to work with their tools and draft power, observing high organization and discipline."

At that time, almost 30,000 tons of saved ammunition lay on the Vistula bridgeheads, and on the outskirts of Warsaw, hundreds of trains with fuel, shells, and heavy equipment arrived from the Union accumulated... Automobile transport could not meet the needs of the front, since the distance from the supply bases to the active troops was 550-650 kilometers. Then General Antipenko proposed using captured rolling stock to send trains to Kustrin by a circuitous route through Deblin, Lodz, Kutno, Torun, Bydgoszcz, Schneidemühl, and Landsberg. The 5th railway brigade was launched at the forefront.

On February 3-5, more than 100 trains (30-40 wagons each) stretched along this 1,000-kilometer bypass track, but none of them reached the place of unloading.

Zhukov had to take a break.

The operation, known in Soviet military science as the Vistula-Oder operation, was one of the largest operations of the Second World War in terms of scope and achieved military-political results. In the course of it, the Red Army defeated the German troops in Poland and captured bridgeheads on the western bank of the Oder. Military operations were transferred to the central regions of Germany.

The operation showed the increased skill of the Soviet

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mandovanie and staffs. General von Mellenthin noted: "It was clear that their Supreme High Command had completely mastered the technique of organizing the offensive of huge mechanized armies and that Stalin was full of Reshimo-. be the first to enter Berlin.

The irretrievable losses of the Wehrmacht amounted to about 220 thousand people, including 147 thousand prisoners, about 14,000 guns and mortars, up to 1400 tanks and assault guns, 340 aircraft. However, these figures must be approached with a certain degree of caution, because in the reports even the adversary was "threshed" and taken prisoner by regiments and divisions. At the front headquarters, these data were immediately divided by three before sending the final report to Moscow, otherwise it turned out to be an obvious nonsense, as General Telegin said:

"After the Warsaw-Lodz-Poznan operation, we began to count how many prisoners were captured and how many actually arrived at the collection points in the camps. A striking picture emerged. So, for example, from January 14 to March 12, the 8th Guards. The army showed us in a report 28,149 people, and according to ten-day reports, the army took 40,000; according to its own reports, only 27,953 people turned out to be handed over to front-line points; in fact, it was taken from the 8th Guards. army - 5221 people. Out of 40 thousand, 5 thousand remained. Why was it reported that 28 thousand were handed over to front-line points? The 47th Army reported that 4497 people were handed over to the reception centers of the 61st Army, and the 61st Army does not confirm this with any documents ...

During the January battles of 1945, the headquarters of the armies and separate corps of the 1st Belorussian Front reported the destruction of 1749 and the capture of 599 tanks and self-propelled guns of the enemy, which corresponded to the number of tanks and self-propelled guns 2348 required to equip fourteen ty German tank divisions.

In fact, in January 1945, in total, two tank divisions, three brigades of assault guns, two motorized divisions and separate tank units and subunits operated in front of the front.

with a total number of not more than 920 units. The Ams have already destroyed and captured 2348."

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The total losses of the two fronts over the 23 days of the operation, according to official statistical studies, are 194 thousand soldiers and officers, irretrievable losses are 44 thousand, 1257 tanks and self-propelled guns, 347 guns and 343 aircraft. It is not clear how these figures fit in with the statement of Colonel General K.V. Krainyukova: "The troops of the (1st Ukrainian) Front inflicted significant damage on the enemy... But they themselves suffered considerable losses in men and equipment. The military council of the front petitioned the Headquarters to send us 100,000 soldiers, sergeants and officers to replenish the troops, as well as to supply 1830 tank self-propelled guns (?)."

## EAST PRUSIAN OPERATION

The East Prussian operation was an integral part of the general strategic offensive of the Red Army.

The idea of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was to cut off the "nest of German imperialism" from the central regions of Germany, press the East Prussian grouping of Germans to the sea, dismember and destroy it piece by piece. Actions for "cutting off" were assigned to the 2nd Belorussian Front of Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky, who was supposed to deliver a deep blow from the lower reaches of the Narew River to Marienburg, in the direction of the Danzig Bay. At the same time, north of the Masurian Lakes, a frontal attack on Königsberg was carried out without any frills by the 3rd Belorussian Front under the command of 38-year-old General of the Army I.D. Chernyakhovsky. He was to be assisted by the 43rd Army of the 1st Baltic Front.

There was no need to come up with anything new. This option with "arrows" aimed at Königsberg and Marienburg, with the introduction of a cavalry-mechanized army into the breakthrough, "pressing" to the sea and subsequent "dismemberment", Soviet strategists, concerned about strengthening the defense capability, thoughtfully lost on the cards back in January 1941 years under the leadership of Marshal S.K. Timoshenko. True, the "Eastern", commanded by Colonel-General D.G. Pavlov, then we lost. The invasion troops got stuck in the lines of fortified areas, suffered heavy losses, and then "for

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wicked" - General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, - after waiting for the approach of the reserves, having concentrated 2300 tanks, they delivered a powerful counterattack from Letzen to Lomzha and split the front of the "Eastern" into two parts. In January 1945, German generals could only dream of such reserves.

The directives for conducting offensive operations were communicated to the front commands in November-December.

3rd Belorussian Front (39th, 5th, 28th, 2nd Guards, 31st, 11th Guards, [-I Air Army, II and 2nd Guards Tank Corps - a total of 54 rifle divisions, 2 tank corps, 6 separate tank brigades, | fortified area - 708 thousand people) it was ordered to defeat the enemy's til Zitsko-Insterburg grouping of the enemy and, having overcome 70-80 kilometers, no later than 10-12 days of the operation, to capture the line of Nemonien, Norkitten, Goldap . In the future, develop an offensive against Königsberg along both banks of the Pregel River, with the main forces on its southern bank.

The 1st Baltic Front had the forces of the 43rd Army, Lieutenant General A.P. Beloborodov to advance along the left bank of the Neman and thereby assist the troops of Chernyakhovsky in defeating the Tilsit group.

2nd Belorussian Front (50th, 49th, 3rd, 48th, 2nd shock, 65th, 70th, 5th guards tank, 4th air armies, 8th mechanized, 1, 3rd, 8th Guards Tank, 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps - 63 rifle, 3 cavalry divisions, | 1 mechanized and 5

tank corps, 3 separate tank brigades and 3 fortified areas - 881 thousand people, 2195 tanks and self-propelled guns, 11 thousand guns and mortars) received the task of defeating the Pshasnysh-Mlav grouping of the enemy and taking over the border on the 10-11th day Myshinets, Dzyaltovo, Plock, advancing up to 90 kilometers. In the future, advance in the general direction of Nowe Miasto, Marienburg. To assist the Belorussian Front in defeating the Warsaw grouping, Marshal Rokossovsky was ordered by at least one army, reinforced by a tank or mechanized corps, to strike around Modlin from the west in order to prevent the enemy from retreating beyond the Vistula and to be ready to cross the river.

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In total, almost 1.7 million soldiers and officers, 25,426 guns and mortars, 3,859 tanks and self-propelled guns, 3,097 combat aircraft.

The defense of East Prussia and Northern Poland was entrusted to Army Group Center under the command of Colonel General Georg Reinhardt. The group occupied a 550-kilometer line from the mouth of the Neman to the mouth of the Western Bug and consisted of the 3rd tank, 4th and 2nd field armies. They numbered 34 infantry and people's grenadier, 3 tank, 4 tank-grenadier divisions, one brigade - 580 thousand soldiers and officers, 200 thousand Volkssturm, 8200 guns and mortars, 700 tanks and assault guns. The reserve of the army group consisted of the tank corps "Grossdeutschland", the parachute-tank corps "Hermann Goering", the tank-grenadier division "Brandenburg", the 5th and 7th tank, 18th tank-grenadier, 23rd infantry divisions. zii and the 10th scooter fighter brigade. Air cover was provided by part of the forces of the same 6th Air Fleet.

By the beginning of 1945, the importance of East Prussia as a military-industrial region and the main food base of Germany increased even more. Large enterprises of the military, shipbuilding and engineering industries operated here, supplying the Wehrmacht with weapons and ammunition. East Prussia had significant human resources. Routes to Pomerania and Berlin passed through its territory. The ports on the Baltic Sea extended far to the east allowed the German command to base large fleet forces, as well as maintain contact with those cut off in Courland.

divisions.

From a military point of view, the East Prussian grouping hung over the troops of the 2nd and |

German troops relied on a defense system developed in terms of engineering: strong defensive zones, echeloned to a considerable depth and consisting

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from field positions and long-term fortified areas. Since October 1944, when the danger of a Soviet invasion of Germany became visibly real, the German command improved and rebuilt defensive structures on the territory of East Prussia. Thousands of local residents were mobilized by the military authorities and the Nazi Party to dig trenches and anti-tank ditches. During the construction of fortifications, advantageous natural boundaries, canals, solid stone structures of numerous farms and large settlements, interconnected by a well-developed network of highways and railways, were used.

General Erhard Raus, who commanded the 3rd Panzer Army, recalls: "All the men were sent to dig trenches and gun positions. In total, civilian builders built 12 main defensive lines and reserve positions in East Prussia, which were very well equipped. Probably the most interesting invention was the impromptu machine gun emplacements, which were very practical and simple. They consisted of two concrete



pipes. One stood vertically and served to place a machine gun, and the second lay horizontally and connected to the base of the first. She served as a shelter for machine gunners. This improvisation proved to be a good cover from the Soviet tanks, it was built in a minimum amount of time, it was easy to transport in vehicles, and it was very effective. In addition to these defensive positions, long anti-tank ditches were dug across all roads. Trenches were dug along the roads, and anti-tank and machine-gun nests were built at all the most important points. Around every village and farm, positions were prepared for all-round defense.

The defense system included the Ilmenhorst, Letzen, Allenstein, Heilsberg, Mlav, Torun fortified areas, as well as 13 ancient fortresses. All this fortification splendor reached a depth of 150-200 kilometers.

Of particular importance was the presence in the central part of East Prussia of the Masurian lakes, which separated the

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the troops that fell from the east to the southern and northern groups and complicated the interaction between them. It was in this area that in 1914 the Russian invasion armies under the command of Generals Samsonov and Rennenkampf were defeated.

From the sea, the German group was supported by significant naval forces based in the immediate vicinity of the combat area.

It can be said that the whole of East Prussia, from the border to the Baltic Sea, was a huge fortress. Always. And in January 1945 - more than ever. The morale of the troops was high. The bulk of the soldiers and officers were determined to fight resolutely. Moreover, most of them were local natives. For many, Prussia symbolized their German Motherland.

A captured militiaman of the 349th People's Grenadier Division during interrogation stated that the personnel unconditionally believed in the victory of the Reich: "It doesn't matter that we retreated, we will still win. When and how is the Fuhrer's business."

In order to prevent defeatism and contrary to the proposals of the military command, which, from a purely practical point of view, understood that the large civilian population "would become an incredible hindrance to the fighting troops", not to mention the inevitable victims, East Prussian Gauleiter Erich Koch forbade the evacuation of the population from threatened areas. Ideally, it should have completely fallen under the banner of the Volkssturm. Or werewolf. Even Guderian's wife was forced to stay on the estate near Deipenhof, setting an example of vigor and patriotism for the locals.

"Every bunker, every quarter of a German city and every village," demanded Hitler, "should turn into a fortress, in which the enemy would either bleed to death, or the garrison of this fortress would die in hand-to-hand combat under its ruins."

The task of preparing the German people for the "ruthless struggle" was taken into their own hands with all zeal by party functionaries. The power of the military command extended only to the front line 10 kilometers wide, in

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The rear was controlled by the National Socialists, spinning the flywheel of propaganda and terror, which at times took on "terrifying forms"—an age-old commissar's job. They also led the Volkssturm units. Even the 1st Military District was not subordinate to the Army Group Center, but to Himmler, as the commander of the reserve army. As a result, "it was not easy to figure out which authority was in charge of what, which made any work extremely difficult."

This discord between the military and party institutions was immediately felt by General Otto Lyash, who was appointed commander of the district:

"Relations between the commander of the army group, Colonel General Reinhardt, whom I visited shortly after taking office, and the Gauleiter were extremely tense. Koch, as the newly appointed "Reich Defense Commissioner" and head of the Volkssturm troops, did what he wanted, regardless of the needs of the front ... Being ignorant, the party bigwigs, however, ordered the construction of positions. It is true that tactical leadership was to remain with the army, but Herr Bormann gave tactical instructions through the Reich Commissar for Defense, and not a single East Prussian Kreisleiter allowed himself to be instructed by a military commander if this commander's opinion differed from Bormann's. This resulted in constant friction and disputes, which had a detrimental effect on the construction of the defensive line and on military work in general. However, the most egregious misunderstanding was the subordination of the so-called Volkssturm to the Gauleiter, and thus the Party. The old, tried and tested officers and non-commissioned officers of the reserve were forced to carry out amateurish orders of small party officials, contrary to all their experience. Gauleiter saw in the Volkssturm, perhaps, an additional means of strengthening his personal positions and, contrary to all my suggestions, insisted on his power ... Koch, apparently, considered himself absolutely competent in military matters, for he once declared to the military commander: "If you continue to retreat at the front, I

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With my Volkssturm I will drive your soldiers back to their positions.

Army Group "Center" had the task, relying on heavily fortified defenses, to stop the advance of the "Bolshevik hordes", pin them down, and, if necessary, launch a counterattack on the flank and rear of the grouping of Soviet troops operating in the Berlin direction.

Directly in front of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, in a strip with a total length of 170 kilometers from Sudarga on the Neman to Avgustov, fifteen divisions from the 3rd Panzer Army of General Raus and the 4th Army of General Friedrich Gossbach - the 9th and 26th army, 41st tank corps, parachute-tank corps "Hermann Goering" and 5th tank division.

The main line of German defense had two fortified positions up to 10 kilometers deep. The Ilmenkhorst fortified area was located 30-40 kilometers from the main belt, consisting of three field-type belts. The near approaches to Königsberg from the east and southeast were protected by the long-term fortified position of the Heilsberg fortified area. It included an average of up to 5, and in the main areas up to 10-12 pillboxes on | | kilometer of the front — a total of 91 1 fortifications.

In total, nine defensive lines were created in the Königsberg direction, located 12-15 kilometers from one another. The Soviet troops were faced with the prospect of chewing through them one by one without the hope of reaching the operational space. Therefore, the German defense had to be torn apart extremely resolutely, continuously, at a high pace, not allowing the enemy to withdraw to intermediate lines and gain a foothold on them.

The plan developed at the headquarters of General Chernyakhovsky consisted in inflicting a frontal attack on the grouping defending north of the Masurian Lakes, and in the further development of the offensive on Königsberg in order to cover the main forces of Army Group Center from the north and its subsequent defeat together with troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front.

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The front commander decided to strike the main blow north of Stallupönen in the direction of Velau, bypassing the powerful centers of resistance Gumbinnen and Insterburg from the north. It was planned to break through the enemy defenses in a section 24 kilometers wide with the forces of the 39th, 28th armies,

each of which was assigned an artillery division of the breakthrough. On the first day, these armies were supposed to take possession of the enemy's second line of defense in order to ensure the entry of the 2nd Guards Tatsinsky tank corps into the breakthrough. To increase the strike, the 1st Guards Army, Colonel General K.N., was in the second echelon. Galitsky and the 1st Red Banner Tank Corps, Lieutenant General V.V. Butkov. The deployment of the second echelon was planned to be carried out on the fourth day of the operation from the line of the Inster River. Provision of the main grouping of the front from the north was assigned to the right-flank formations of the 39th Army, Colonel General I.I. Lyudnikov. From the south, it was covered by the 2nd Guards Army of Lieutenant General P.G. Chanchibadze, which was to go on the offensive on the third day in the general direction of Darkemen. The left-flank 31st Army, commanded by Lieutenant General P.G. Shafranov, had the task of firmly defending the area from Goldap to Augustow.

During the preparation period, a detailed reconnaissance of the enemy defense was carried out, in particular, continuous aerial photography of fortified areas and defensive lines up to and including Koenigsberg was carried out. However, they had a rather vague idea of the forces of the enemy. For example, the front headquarters, "based on intelligence data," assumed that 24 divisions were holding the defense from the German side, including 7 tank divisions and 6 assault gun brigades. Accordingly, our "Stirlitz" counted up to 1000 tanks and 900 assault guns from the enemy, although in fact there were 367 of them all together. Based on these data, which significantly overestimated the enemy's strength, a primitively "crowbar" plan of operation was drawn up, which provided for a phased, at a rate of 16-18 kilometers per day, grinding everything that was encountered on the path of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

Given the presence of strong defensive fortifications

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at the forefront, General Chernyakhovsky concentrated forces and means on the narrow sections of the breakthrough. As a result of the regroupings carried out, an artillery density of 160-220 guns and mortars per kilometer of front was achieved. Artillery preparation was planned to last 120 minutes. For its implementation was allocated 1,500 tons of ammunition, which amounted to 50% of the total amount of ammunition available at the front. And there were quite a few of them. Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky notes that "the East Prussian operation in terms of ammunition consumption was unparalleled among all operations in the history of wars. Two fronts received 13.3 million shells and mines, 620 million rounds of ammunition, 2.2 million hand grenades. To participate in aviation training, except for aircraft of the 1st Air Army, Colonel General T.T. Khryukin (12 aviation divisions and 5 separate regiments), it was planned to involve part of the forces of the 3rd Air Army of the Baltic Front and the recently formed 18th Air Army of the ADD. Air armada actions were coordinated by Headquarters Air Marshal F.Ya. Falaleev.

Preparing the starting areas, the troops dug about 2.2 thousand kilometers of trenches and communication passages, equipped more than 2 thousand command and observation posts, 10.4 thousand dugouts and dugouts, prepared supply routes, warehouses, passages for tanks and much more. .

The activities carried out in the zone of the 3rd Belorussian Front were no secret to the German command;

"The Luftwaffe took daily photographs of all these works, and the photographs clearly showed new structures, vehicle tracks leading to ammunition depots and artillery positions. Our agents reported the arrival of new divisions. Several intercepted radio messages revealed the position of many forward command posts, although

The Russians diligently kept radio silence. All these signs clearly showed exactly where the 3rd Belorussian Front would strike the main blow and what forces were assembled for this. The Russians were preparing with tedious methodicalness. Ar-

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Tillerian observers occupied newly built correction posts...

Dive-bombers began bombing and shelling our escape routes, command posts and cities directly behind the front line. We detected intensive movements of Russian troops towards the front, especially on the night of 8 and 10 January. This was irrefutable evidence of the preparation of the offensive ... "

In the operational summary of the 3rd German Panzer Army for January 11, 1945, it was noted that "the enemy will be ready for offensive operations in 2-3 days." The next day, a report from the army headquarters said that "the preparation of the enemy for an offensive in front of the front of the 3rd Panzer Army has apparently been completed." The data of military observers, agents, aviation reconnaissance and radio intercepts were confirmed by Soviet defectors.

In principle, it was not difficult to determine the most probable directions for the strikes of the Soviet armies - north and south of the Masurian swamps. In terms of terrain conditions, the Insterburg direction was the most convenient for the actions of all branches of the armed forces. It was here, on a stretch of 20 kilometers, that General Raus deployed four divisions of the 26th Army Corps (56th and 69th Infantry, 349th and 549th People's Grenadiers), almost all assault guns, army artillery, an anti-aircraft regiment and a brigade of six-barreled mortars. Behind the corps, commanded by General Gerhard Matzki, was the army reserve, the 5th Panzer Division with all of its 50 tanks. The remaining 140 kilometers of the front of the 3rd Panzer Army were covered by four divisions of the 9th Army Corps (286th security, 548, 551, 561st people's grenadiers) of General Rolf Wüttmann.

On the evening of January 12, having received information about the advance of Soviet troops to the initial areas for attack, Routh ordered, leaving the outposts, to evacuate the first two lines of trenches.

Marshal Rokossovsky decided to deliver the main blow from the Ruzhansky bridgehead on the Narew River with the forces of the 3rd, 48th, 2nd shock and 5th guards tank armies. Breaking through the defense

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tivnik on the 18-kilometer section, they were to advance on Mlava, Marienburg, bypassing the Allenstein and Letzen fortified areas from the south. To expand the breakthrough to the north, the 3rd Army of Colonel General A.V. Gorbatova was given the task of striking Allenstein. The 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps, which was supposed to cut off the enemy's main escape routes to the west, was supposed to be brought in in the same direction. 49th Army Lieutenant General I.T. Grishina, who was in the second echelon, had the task of launching an offensive on Myshinets with her main forces, using a breakthrough in the zone of the 3rd Army.

The second blow was delivered from the Serotsky bridgehead by the forces of the 65th and 70th Armies and the 1st Guards Donskoy Tank Corps. The armies were to break through the defenses on the [0-kilometer section and advance in the direction of Naselsk, Belsk. 'At the same time, the 70th Army, Colonel General V.S. Popova was part of the forces to prevent the withdrawal of the Warsaw enemy group behind the Vistula and be ready to force it to the west of Modlin.

On the 50th Army, Colonel General I.V. Boldin was entrusted with the defense of the sector of the front from Augustow to Novogradok.

"The forces were impressive," recalls Rokossovsky, "and corresponded to the task assigned to us." True, the marshal was worried about the lack of interaction with the neighbor on the right: "The Headquarters, apparently, counted on the fact that the neighbor's troops would advance evenly with ours. But we were not even informed where the commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front, I.D. Chernyakhovsky will strike his first blow. I repeat, the Headquarters did not say a word about our interaction with the right neighbor, apparently believing that there could be no complications to the north of us. The main thing was to maintain a close elbow connection with the target

to Berlin by the front of Marshal Zhukov. The Headquarters "categorically insisted" on interaction with him.

The offensive was planned to begin with an hour and a half artillery preparation with a density of 180 to 300 guns and mortars per kilometer of front. Ammunition was ordered not to spare. As General of the Army P.I. Batov,

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commander of the 65th Army: "Even when the artillery preparation plan was being discussed, Colonel General A.K. Sokolsky said: "Get as many shells as you can take out." Until now, we have not known such generosity ... A fire strike of unprecedented strength was a feature of the January offensive (we had a breakthrough artillery corps and nine separate cannon regiments).

Even more, according to Marshal of Artillery K.P. Kazakov, "had" in the 2nd shock: "The 8th breakthrough artillery corps as part of the 23rd artillery divisions, then three more divisions - the 26th artillery, 4th Guards mortar and 47th anti-aircraft artillery. By the beginning of January, in addition to regular army, corps and divisional artillery, we had 18 more artillery, mortar and guards mortar brigades. Six artillery brigades were armed with heavy guns and high-power guns, and one mortar brigade was armed with new 160-mm mortars... In the penetration section of the 381st division, the density of artillery was the highest of those that I knew during the entire war, - 468 trunks.

Aviators of the 4th Air Army (14 aviation divisions and 4 separate regiments - more than 1,500 combat aircraft) of Colonel General K.A. Vershinin on the first day of the offensive, 1400 sorties were to be made, only for the direct support of the troops of the 48th and 2nd strike armies four assault aviation divisions were allocated - almost 400 aircraft, "built" in eight echelons.

In order to ensure surprise, reconnaissance in force on the eve of the offensive was ordered not to be undertaken, but to be carried out by assault battalions in the first fifteen minutes of artillery preparation.

Political officers and agitators, army newspapers and "divisions" were engaged in the entire period of "political mobilization of troops", which, according to the head of the political department of the front, Lieutenant General A.D. Okorokova, was "inextricably linked with the inculcation of hatred for the enemy — German fascism": "While holding talks and meetings, politicians

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The workers widely used the materials of the Extraordinary Commission, which investigated the atrocities of the Nazis on the territory of the USSR, the report of the Soviet Information Bureau about the villainous murder of Soviet parliamentarians near Budapest, letters from people who experienced the horrors of fascist oppression. On the initiative of the head of the political department of the 48th Army, Major General I.I. Mikhalechuk, political workers questioned the boys and officers, which of them had a personal account with the Nazis. Only in the 68th artillery brigade, out of 842 interviewed, 609 people said that the occupiers killed or drove their relatives to Germany." It is clear that all these "initiatives from below" were a typical form of conveying to the personnel the general line of the party. General V.V. Krainyukov used similar methods on the 1st Ukrainian Front: "The most effective forms of instilling hatred for the enemy were rallies, after which the fighters opened personal accounts of revenge with the invaders ... It turned out that every soldier, sergeant and officer of the battalion has the right to present his special account to the enemy. But the total score against the Nazis was huge."

Against the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front, the 20th, 23rd and 27th Army Corps of the 2nd Army of General Weiss held the defense. The tank corps "Grossdeutschland" and the 7th

tank division.

Here the Germans also dug in qualitatively, so Rokossovsky did not believe that they would leave their positions on their own initiative: "It happened more than once before that the enemy, even before our artillery preparation, withdrew his troops into the depths so that we would use up ammunition in an empty place. Now he is unlikely to go for it. It has strong positions, replete with strongholds with forts, although of the old type, but well-placed and permanently these positions would only make our task easier. fortified for defense. A voluntary withdrawal of the enemy from We are \_ And he, of course, will not dare to leave them. Well, let's pick out the rovers from their concrete holes. strong enough."

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By the way, the marshal, following in line with Soviet historical thought, also noted in his memoir that,

fulfilling an ally

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duty, "in order to get the American and British troops out of trouble," he was forced to shorten the preparation time for the operation, although he himself set the readiness period for the 5th Guards Tank Army "a little more than two weeks" at the end of December.

On the night of January 13, the shock groups of the 3rd Belorussian Front took up the starting position for the attack. By this time it was already clear that there could be no question of any use of aviation: the weather was disgusting - fog, thick sleet, almost zero visibility. At 6 o'clock in the morning, the forward battalions were to conduct reconnaissance in force, and at 09.15 artillery preparation began with a volley of Katyushas along the entire breakthrough zone. However, at 5.30 a.m., German artillery launched a preemptive strike at the places of concentration of Soviet troops. As a result of the fire attack, "suffered some losses" of units of the 72nd Rifle Corps.

Soviet artillery preparation began exactly according to plan, although Chernyakhovsky tried to postpone it to a later time. For two hours of firing, the artillery of the 5th Army alone, Colonel General N.I. Krylova fired more than 117,000 shells (in just the first two days of the offensive, Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky proudly reports, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front used up more than 1,000 wagons of the main types of ammunition). Since, according to the conditions of visibility, the adjustment of the fire was excluded, it was carried out along the squares and mainly along the first line of trenches left by the enemy - in fact, over an empty place. What General Routh recalls not without pleasure: "The evacuation of the first two lines was quiet ... When our infantry and artillery took up combat positions, their front line was on the third line of trenches. The Russians fired at all the targets they saw in the attack area 5 kilometers in depth - abandoned cities and former command posts. Our reserves, hiding in the forest, remained intact. The Germans completely retained the system of fire and control, infantry losses were small.

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At 11 o'clock the first echelons of the 39th, 5th and 28th armies went on the attack, relatively quickly and easily capturing the first line of trenches. Raus notes: "The reports of Russian commanders report the capture of the first and second lines of defense, but not a word is said about prisoners and trophies." Already on the way to the second line, the Soviet infantry was pressed to the ground by volleys of German howitzers and jet "nebelwerfers". The methodical "gnawing" of defensive lines began. As a result of the first day of the offensive, despite the introduction of the second echelons, the 39th and 5th armies managed to advance only 2-3 kilometers, and only the 28th army of Lieutenant General A.A. Luchinsky (3rd Guards, 20th, 128th Rifle Corps, 213th Tank Brigade) - up to 7 kilometers. Thus, on January 13, the troops of the shock group of the front did not

fulfilled.

Commander | | th Guards Army, Colonel General K.N. Galitsky, who was supposed to start pushing

, divisions, but did not budge, collected

headquarters and corps commanders for an exchange of views:

"We came to the conclusion that the main reasons for the failure to fulfill the combat mission of the day were not only difficult meteorological conditions, but also leadership shortcomings in some formations and units of the first echelon. Some commanders and headquarters of divisions and corps did not take into account the peculiarities of bad weather, which limited visual observation, did not see the course and results of the battle. So, in the afternoon, the command post of the commander of the 54th Guards Rifle Division was 8.5, and the observation post 5.5 km from the advancing troops. In the 72nd rifle kor-

, Puse of the 5th Army, subjected to a strong fire raid

enemy, disrupted the interaction of infantry, artillery and tanks. Tanks and self-propelled artillery lagged behind the infantry. Solid fog did not allow the gunners to timely detect and suppress targets. Rifle battalions and companies were not given the necessary number of escort guns for direct fire. In addition, engineering reconnaissance was not well organized. As a result, the clearance of obstacles for

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was late. This delayed the advance of the infantry and military equipment.

The lost time was used by the enemy to pull up reserves and consolidate battle formations in the breakthrough sector.

On the morning of January 14, the German infantry began counterattacks with the support of the 190th assault gun battalion and the 5th Panzer Division of General Günther von Hoffman-Schönborn. Bloody battles unfolded, especially in the Kattenau region, which was well fortified and dominated the surrounding area. Individual points and knots of resistance changed hands several times. And although Soviet aviation, taking advantage of the improved meteorological conditions, subjected the enemy defenses to fierce bombardment, the troops of the front on that day were able to advance in some areas by no more than 3 kilometers.

On January 15, formations of the 5th Army (72nd, 45th, 65th Rifle Corps, 2nd Guards Tank Brigade) covered another 4 kilometers, the rest of the armies 1-2 kilometers. The Soviet troops suffered heavy losses: "Groups of Russians lay in heaps, especially many of them were on the slopes of the heights among the wrecked and burnt tanks."

Lieutenant I.L. Degen was a company commander in the 2nd Guards Tank Brigade attached to the 5th Army:

"The passages in the minefields were provided to us by 21 minesweepers. And then 65 tanks of our brigade and two heavy tank regiments went on the attack - 42 IS-2 tanks (75th and 82nd guards tank regiments. - Author) and 42 more SAU-152 installations (373rd and 395th and Guards Heavy Self-Propelled Artillery Regiments. - Auth.). The task for such an armada was set to be modest - to capture Vilkupen by evening, to break forward 14 kilometers. But on the first day we were able to walk only two kilometers and soon retreated a kilometer. The Germans put guns in the cellars of stone houses. Pillboxes with concrete walls two meters thick were stuck between the houses. They fired wildly at us. It also got from the "Volkssturmists" armed with faustpatrons. Have we reached this Vilkoupen only on the fifth day and only

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thanks to the sappers-bombers. The tanks blocked the "nests" of pillboxes, the sappers planted half a ton of explosives and blew up the Germans. But on the ninth day of the offensive, only six T-34 tanks, two IS-2s and four self-propelled guns remained from our entire tank colossus. Only the crew of senior lieutenant Fedorov survived from my company.

Of course, the German units were gradually ground down as well. However, in general, the current situation threatened to dampen the offensive and the failure of the entire operation.

To complete the breakthrough of the enemy's tactical defense zone and prevent him from maneuvering forces, it was necessary to increase the power of the strike and intensify the actions of troops on the flanks of the strike force. On January 16, south of Gumbinnen, the 2nd Guards Army (11th, 13th Guards, 60th Rifle Corps, 153rd Tank Brigade) went on the offensive; In the zone of the 5th Army, on the orders of Chernyakhovsky, with the support of nine (!) Aviation divisions, the 2nd Guards Tank Corps of Lieutenant General A.S. Burdeyny (229 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts). The effect turned out to be insignificant. Chanchibadze's army, of course, pinned down some of the enemy's forces, but made almost no progress itself. As for the Tatsinsky corps, with its help it was possible to capture two strongholds - Kussen Radshen, "but this success did not compensate for the heavy losses": "Dozens of assault guns and hundreds of faustpatrons delayed the offensive of the 2nd tank corps, which was forced instead of developing success in the depths of the defense, complete its breakthrough by being attacked from well-camouflaged positions.

Coincidentally, it was at this time, on the orders of Hitler, that the Brandenburg and Hermann Goering motorized divisions began to be transferred to Poland. Guderian is absolutely right in arguing that these combat-ready formations were withdrawn from the defensive lines in East Prussia "at a time when the crisis of the Russian offensive was brewing there", and their withdrawal meant "that in East Prussia the same catastrophe would begin as which happened on the Vistula.

The penetration of Soviet troops into the defense in the Kussen area

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threatened to encircle part of the forces of the 9th Army Corps in the so-called Lazden ledge. In an effort to avoid this, 'having lost reserves, Reinhardt on the evening of January 16 allowed General Wüttmann's corps to be withdrawn from this area to the right bank of the Inster River. The left-flank divisions of the 26th Army Corps should also have retreated here. Having established the retreat of the enemy, the formations of the 39th Army of General Lyudnikov (113th, 5th Guards, 94th Rifle Corps, 28th Guards Tank Brigade) began to pursue, trying to surround the units of the 548th and the 561st People's Grenadier Divisions. At the same time, the 5th and 28th armies continued to trample in front of the second line of defense, although the aviation of the two air armies made more than 2,800 sorties that day.

Given the situation, the front commander decided to immediately use the advance of the 39th Army to bring in the second echelon. At first, the 1st Tank Corps of Lieutenant General V.V. was put forward in this direction. Butkov, followed by formations of the 2nd Guards Tank Corps. True, which has already lost half of its composition, and the 11th Guards Army of General Galitsky (8th, 16th, 32nd Guards Rifle Corps). The army was assigned the 2nd Guards and 34th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Divisions, the 120th Tank Division, the 21st and th guards mortar, 75th heavy tank, 350th heavy self-propelled artillery regiments. General Galitsky had at his disposal 1,436 artillery pieces of 76 mm caliber and above, and all the forces of the 1st Air Army.

The 11th Guards Army and both tank corps were to concentrate in the Neshtonveten-Kraupishken-Ivenberg area, then, with a powerful blow in the western and south-western directions, completely defeat the enemy's Tilsit and, at the same time, the Gumbinnen-Insterburg groupings of the enemy. To achieve this goal, the formations of the 1st Panzer Corps and the 39th Army had to cut off the escape routes of the Tilsit group, after which, together with units of the 43rd Army, which struck from the area



Tilsit, destroy it, and the 5th and 28th Armies with a strike from the east and the 11th Guards Army with the 2nd Tank Corps with a strike from the north along the defensive line along the western bank of the Inster River - to surround in the area west of Insterburg and destroy the Gumbinnen- Insterburg group.

At noon on January 18, the 1st Panzer Corps (178 tanks and self-propelled guns) entered the gap on the left flank of the 39th Army. Having overtaken the infantry, destroying disparate enemy groups on their way, the tankers traveled 25 kilometers, reached the Inster River and captured bridgeheads on its right bank. There was a threat of capturing Tilsit from the south. However, it was not possible to build on the success: the formations of the corps were stopped by the stubborn resistance of the 551st People's Grenadier and 69th Infantry Divisions. The commander of the latter, General Siegfried Rein, died. By the end of the day, the advanced units of Lyudnikov's army reached the river.

At the same time, the 5th and 28th armies, having resumed their offensive, completed the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone, although the rate of advance remained low due to continuous counterattacks.

As a result of six days of continuous, fierce fighting, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front rammed the German defense north of Gumbinnen in a sector up to 60 kilometers and advanced 30-40 kilometers in depth. The enemy was drained of blood, but certainly not defeated.

On January 19, the 43rd Army (90th, 103rd, 54th Rifle Corps) of General A.P. Beloborodov. On the morning of January 20, the formations of the army, having crossed the Neman on ice, captured the city of Tilsit.

From the border of the Inster River at the junction of the 39th and 5th armies | 1st Guards Army. Having ahead of two tank corps, she rushed in a south-westerly direction, captured the centers of resistance Gross-Skaisgirren and Aulovenen, and by the end of January 21, she reached the Pregel River northeast of Velau and the approaches to Insterburg from the north. The fighting was fierce. Rifle divisions managed to cover no more than 10 kilometers per day. At the same time, every 2-3 kilometers it was necessary to stop, regroup and

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to resume the offensive after a powerful artillery preparation. In the Tatsinsky corps, 34 tanks and 25 self-propelled guns remained in service. In view of the fact that the advance of the tank corps slowed down, and Beloborodov's divisions were advancing on a wide front, it was not possible to encircle anyone. The Tilsit grouping managed to retreat and take up defensive positions at the turn of the Deime River.

Troops of the 43rd and 39th armies approached the Gulf of Curishes-Haff and the Deima River. The Insterburg grouping of the enemy was deeply engulfed from the northwest. At the same time, the offensive of the 5th, 28th and 2nd Guards armies stalled. Especially bloody battles were fought on the outskirts of Gumbinnen. The city was taken only in the afternoon of 2] January.

On the night of January 22, the 11th Guards Army, fighting against the same 26th Army Corps and the 5th Panzer Division, with the assistance of the 5th Army, launched an assault on Insterburg. By morning, the city was captured by Soviet troops. Divisions of the 16th and 36th Guards Rifle Corps reached the Pregel River in a 30-kilometer section from Tapeau to Instenburg, crossed it in a number of places and turned to the south. The successes of the shock grouping of the front allowed the armies of Chanchibadze and Shafranov to start moving, advancing in the Darkemen direction from 8 to 13 kilometers.

The loss of Gumbinnen and Insterburg had a negative impact on the stability of the enemy's defense in the Königsberg direction. Having been defeated on the Inster River, the German troops began to retreat to the line of the Deime, Pregel and Alle rivers - the main positions of the Heilsberg fortified area.

On the night of January 23, the commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front gave a new operational directive. According to it, the 11th Guards Army was to cross its entire strip of the Pregel River and

Alle and by the end of the day on January 23, go 20-25 kilometers. On the right, Ludnikov's 39th Army should force the Daimyo and advance 8-10 kilometers. The 1st Red Banner Tank Corps, advancing in its zone, had to force the Daima in the Tapida area, advance further along the Koenigsberg highway and break through to a depth of more than 20 kilometers. To eliminate the backlog of the central grouping of the front, Chernyakhovsky

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ordered the commander of the 5th Army to regroup during the night and by 09:00 on January 23 to withdraw the 65th Corps to the Saalau-Simonen-Wirkallen area, that is, 16-18 kilometers west of Insterburg and prepare it for crossing the Pregel. Then, with a concentric attack of the corps in the direction of Muljen from the north and the main forces of the army from the line they occupied southwest of Insterburg, defeat the opposing enemy and by the end of the day reach the Ilme River in the Schönrade-Grabenswalde sector. The 2nd Guards Tank Corps was ordered to strike in the direction of Klein Nur, seize the crossings over the Alle and continue the offensive towards Allenburg.

General Galitsky does not hide his bewilderment: "From this directive of the commander of the front it is clear that he decided to continue the attack on Königsberg to the north and south. Pregel. In our opinion, the grouping of front troops was separated by the river, which prevented the maneuvering of forces, and, consequently, weakened the strike power of the armies aimed at Königsberg. Moreover, the most combat-ready 1st tank corps was heading north of the river. Pregel for an offensive in the zone of the 39th Army, and the 2nd Tank Corps, which had essentially lost its combat capability by this time, remained in the zone of the 11th Guards Army. After reviewing the directive, we did not quite understand where the main efforts of the front were concentrated, in which direction the main blow was delivered - north or south of the river. Pregel?

During January 23, formations of the 11th Guards Army moved forward 10-15 kilometers. North of the Pregel River, the troops of the 43rd and 39th Armies covered 8-12 kilometers, reached the eastern coast of the Curishes-Haff Gulf and crossed Deime, capturing Labiau and the eastern outskirts of Goldbach. On the left wing of the front, the troops of the 28th, 2nd Guards and 31st Armies advanced up to 20 kilometers during the day of the battle and reached the area of the Masurian Lakes.

"It seems to us," writes General Galitsky, "that the main drawback of the offensive at this stage was that it was carried out along the entire front without concentrating

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of the main efforts of the armies in decisive directions, that the armies were aimed practically not at outflanking the positions of enemy groupings, but at pushing them to the west, and this made it possible for the enemy to organize a relatively systematic withdrawal to previously prepared fortified intermediate positions. Losing time to destroy all the enemy engineering structures in a row, the troops of the front slowed down the pace of the offensive.

Obviously, it was necessary to more carefully look for vulnerable areas in the enemy's defense and bypass the most fortified points and defense centers in order to surround his significant groupings without slowing down the offensive.

It was also important that the front did not have a sufficient number of mobile troops, mainly armored ones, necessary for developing the success of combined arms armies. The available tank corps could not solve the tasks that were then facing the troops of the front.

Nevertheless, having broken through the defensive lines on the rivers Deime, Pregel, Alle on January 23-24, having captured the large nodes of resistance Darkemen, Angerburg, the troops of the right wing of the 3rd Belorussian Front continued to rush towards Königsberg. The central grouping - the 5th and 28th armies - led the attack on Friedland. The left-flank armies approached the Masurian Canal.

On January 24, General Chernyakhovsky submitted to the General Staff a plan for the second stage of the operation.

The offensive of the 2nd Belorussian Front developed no less dramatically. At 9 o'clock on January 14, after setting tasks, the units read out the appeal of the Front's Military Council:

"Faithful sons of the Soviet Motherland — Red Army soldiers, sergeants, officers, generals! The time has come to settle accounts with the worst enemies of our Motherland — the German fascist invaders for all their atrocities and atrocities, for the destroyed and plundered Soviet cities and villages... With a new powerful blow, we will hasten the death of the enemy!"

At 10.00 artillery preparation began. During

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For 15 minutes, the artillery fired with maximum tension along the front line and the nearest depth of the enemy's defense, destroying his defensive structures. The forward battalions of the divisions of the first echelon, deployed on the Ruzhany bridgehead, vigorously attacked the front line and broke into the first trench almost without a fight. By 11 o'clock they had captured the second and partly third trenches—they had already had to fight for them—which made it possible to shorten the artillery preparation, and to start the attack support period with a double barrage to the entire depth of the second position. The situation was somewhat different in the zones of the 65th and 70th armies advancing from the Serotsky bridgehead. Here the advanced battalions had less advance, and therefore artillery preparation was carried out in full. Unfavorable meteorological conditions reduced the effectiveness of artillery fire and excluded the possibility of using

aviation.

On the first day, the troops of the 3rd, 48th and 2nd shock armies fought from 3 to 6 kilometers, the 65th and 70th armies penetrated 3-5 kilometers. The first line of defense was not broken through in any of the offensive sectors, although more than 950 wagons of ammunition were used up. The Germans put up fierce resistance and continuously went over to counterattacks.

Colonel General I.I. Fedyuninsky commanded the 2nd shock army:

"The battle was in thick fog. Neither I nor the corps commanders could see how far the battle formations of the divisions had advanced.

The lack of aviation, the difficulties of controlling artillery fire, the scattered and low-energy actions of our tanks in direct support of the infantry led to the fact that the task of the day was not completely solved before dark.

With the onset of darkness, the battle was continued by battalions prepared for night operations.

On the morning of January 15, the shock groups tried to resume the offensive, and the command of Army Group Center, having pulled up reserves, launched flank counterattacks, moreover, the German artillery attack planned by the Soviet commanders

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The soldiers were half an hour ahead of us with their artillery preparation. After that, the 3rd Army (41st, 35th, 40th Rifle Corps) was attacked by the tank-grenadier division "Great Germany", one of the most combat-ready formations of the Wehrmacht, which "was not marked by reconnaissance in our direction". On the left flank of the 2nd Shock Army, the 7th Panzer Division unexpectedly appeared, "the same one that our scouts considered transferred to another front." The cunning Germans managed to "take advantage of the fog" and "imperceptibly concentrated" where they were not expected, and then "violently attacked" our troops. The pace of advancement dropped sharply, in some places to a complete halt. General Gorbатов: "A terrible battle in terms of strength and fierceness broke out on the second day. It was as gloomy as the first one... Instead of the expected development of a successfully launched offensive, it was necessary to conduct encounter and defensive battles of unusual strength with

varying degrees of success ... Yes, it was a terrible fight, a hard day. Our troops did not advance a single step, but they did not retreat a single step.

Reluctantly, Marshal Rokossovsky had to introduce the 8th and 1st Guards Tank Corps into the emerging "cracks" in the bands of the 2nd shock and 65th armies, respectively, and on January 16, in the band of the 48th army, - 8th and mechanized corps. An assault aviation division was operationally subordinate to the commander of each corps. Having repelled several strong counterattacks, the tankers broke the enemy resistance and rushed forward. In order to create conditions for the continuation of the offensive of Gorbатов's corps, units of the 49th Army activated to the right of him. The improved weather made it possible to raise aircraft into the air.

As a result, in three days the troops of the front broke through the tactical defense zone in a 60-kilometer section and advanced to a depth of up to 30 kilometers, capturing the strongholds and communication junctions of Pultusk, Nasielsk, and cut the Ciechanow-Modlin railway line.

In the second half of January 17, the 5th Guards Tank Army (10th and 29th tank corps - 585 tanks and self-propelled guns, 545 guns and mortars) under the command of General

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kovnik V.T. Volsky, supported from the air by an assault air corps, entered the gap in the zone of the 48th Army (29th, 42nd, 53rd rifle corps) of Colonel General N.I. Gusev.

This immediately changed the situation.

8th Guards Tank Corps, Lieutenant General A.F. Popov (252 tanks and self-propelled guns), with a sudden blow, together with the aircraft supporting him, defeated the 7th Panzer Division, and the 8th Mechanized Corps of Lieutenant General A.N. Firsovich was captured by Grudusk. The division "Grossdeutschland" came under attack from the formations of the 48th and 3rd armies and suffered heavy losses. The 5th Guards Tank Army broke away from the combined arms formations and by the end of the day reached the Mlavsky fortified area.

On January 17-18, the strongholds of Ciechanow and Pshasnysh fell.

The 49th Army (70th, 121st Rifle Corps) under General Grishin advanced northward, securing the right flank of the strike force. The armies operating from the Serock bridgehead captured Modlin.

After stubborn five-day fighting, the 2nd Belorussian Front broke through the enemy defenses in a 110-kilometer-wide zone and advanced up to 60 kilometers in depth in the Mlava direction. By this time, the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front had liberated Warsaw, advanced to the Bzura River, and developed an attack on Poznan. However, the remnants of four infantry divisions of the defeated Warsaw group retreated beyond the Vistula and reinforced the 2nd field army, which complicated the situation in front of the left wing of Rokossovsky.

The advance of the shock groupings of the 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts in the Koenigsberg and Marienburg directions, which began after breaking through the defenses of the 3rd Panzer and 2nd German armies, endangered the flanks and rear of the 4th Army, which defended the August salient and found itself "in an extremely unpleasant situation." The commander of Army Group Center saw the danger and tried to get permission from the higher command to withdraw, but Hitler rejected the offer and ordered to protect every inch.

On January 19, the 2nd Belorussian Front launched a pursuit of the enemy, in which the decisive role was played by the

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connections. The main body of the rifle corps marched in columns, the artillery, also in columns, advanced in riffs, and only the forward detachments broke far ahead. Usually a rifle battalion was deployed in vehicles of the artillery battalion attached to it and as a landing force on self-propelled artillery mounts, and rushed forward with a whistle along excellent "foreign" roads. During the day, the troops managed to pass 25-30 kilometers. In the zone of the 48th Army, Rokossovsky introduced the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps of General N.S. Oslikovsky, who crossed the southern border of East Prussia and rushed to Allenstein. Volsky's tank army also developed the offensive. Together with the forward units of the 48th Army, she immediately took possession of Mlava and also entered the borders of East Prussia in the Neidenburg region. To their right, on January 20, the divisions of General Gorbатов's 3rd Army crossed the border. The military council of the army, congratulating all the soldiers "on the entry into the land of the enemy", issued a proclamation: "Our universal long-standing desire has come true. Now we need to get to the heart of Nazi Germany and plunge our Red Army bayonet into it."

Despite the threat of encirclement, Gossbach's 4th Army continued to hold the salient in the area of Augustow. Taking this into account, as well as the difficulties that arose at Chernyakhovsky, on January 20, the Headquarters ordered Rokossovsky the main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front, which were already preparing to force the Vistula, to turn north, in the direction of the city of Elbing, by the shortest route to reach Frisches Haff Bay and cut off the East Prussian enemy grouping from the Pomeranian. At the same time, the 65th and 70th armies were to advance westward at an accelerated pace. For Konstantin Konstantinovich, this order turned out to be "completely unexpected" and poorly thought out:

"Our attention was paid to the speedy advance to the west in order to reliably protect the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, especially its tank armies, from possible attacks from the north. There were no official reports about the events on the sector of the 3rd Belorussian Front, but there were rumors that the offensive was developing slowly there. And if you spend

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Since the large offensive operations that the Headquarters had previously carried out, in which several fronts took part simultaneously, could be considered a model of skill, the organization and leadership of the East Prussian operation raise many doubts. These doubts arose when the Headquarters ordered the 2nd Belorussian Front on January 20 to turn the 3rd, 48th, 5th Guards. tank and 2nd Shock armies to the north and northeast for operations against the East Prussian enemy grouping instead of continuing the offensive to the west. After all, then their troops had already broken through the enemy's defenses and were approaching the Vistula in readiness to force it on the move.

The directive I received actually radically changed the initial task for the front set by Stalin when I was at Headquarters. At that time, not a single word was mentioned about the involvement of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front to participate, together with the 3rd Belorussian Front, in the liquidation of the East Prussian grouping of enemy troops. And since the main task of the front was an offensive to the west in close cooperation with the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, the main grouping of the front's troops was created on the left wing of the front (48th, 2nd shock, 65, 70, 49th and 5th Guards tank armies). According to the directive received, the main task was to encircle the East Prussian grouping of the enemy by attacking the main forces of the front to the north and northeast with access to the Frisch-Gaff Bay. At the same time, we did not free ourselves from the previous task of interacting with the 1st Belorussian Front on the flank and were forced to continue the offensive to the west, having only two armies on the left wing. From that moment, the stretching of the front began, since most of our forces advanced to the north and northeast, and the smaller one is to the west.

This subsequently led to the fact that, due to the rapid advance towards the Oder, the 1st Byelorussian Front had to stretch its troops to secure its exposed flank from the north, since the left wing of our front lagged behind in advancing to the west. And this happened because our front had to carry out two different tasks during this period. And the commander was right | th Belorus-

Zhukov's front, reproaching me for lagging behind the troops and failing to fulfill the task of securing the flank of his front.

I am sure that at that time he understood the groundlessness of his claim against us and presented it only in order to provoke me. The following questions arose: why the Headquarters did not use the very advantageous position of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front and did not combine the blow of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front with the blow of our front, inflicting it approximately from the Lomzha direction, from south to north, in the direction to the Frisch Gaff? In this case, this front should immediately include in its composition the troops of the 50th and 3rd armies with their sectors. The General Staff could not help but know that the strongest fortifications in East Prussia were created in its eastern and southeastern parts. In addition, the configuration of the front itself prompted a strike from south to north in order to cut off East Prussia from Germany. In addition, a strike from this direction was easy to combine with a strike inflicted by the troops of our front. Such a decision would make it easier to break through the enemy front at the very beginning of the operation.

Fulfilling the new directive, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front rushed to the coast of Frisches Haf Bay. The 5th Guards Tank Army advanced especially quickly. On January 20, having captured the city of Neidenburg, a major junction of highways and railways, the tankers headed for Osterode, Elbing. The formations of the left wing of the front advanced more than 40 kilometers in one day, occupying the cities of Serpts, Belsk, Vyshogrud.

2] January, as a result of a night attack by the 10th Tank Corps (117 tanks and 84 self-propelled guns), Major General M.G. Sakhno fell Tannenberg. It was a significant moment. The retreating German units blew up the Tannenberg memorial dedicated to the victory of 1914, and the sarcophagi of the national hero Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and his wife were taken to the West along with the battle colors of the distinguished German regiments. As one of the officials of the German Foreign Ministry noted in his diary, "by destroying the memorial, the Germans officially recognized the fact that they had no hope left.

ever return to Prussia." On the same day, the complex of buildings of the Hitlerite headquarters "Wolfschanze" near Rastenburg was blown up.

Now the Nazi leadership has given permission for the evacuation of the inhabitants of East Prussia and Pomerania. Hundreds of thousands of refugees rushed to the Samland Peninsula - to Pillau, to the Frische-Nerung Spit, beyond the Vistula - to Danzig and Gotenhafen.

"With the approach of the front," writes General K.F. Telegin, "the population completely removed from their places and, having loaded the most necessary belongings on all kinds of carts and carriages, began to move on foot, or rather flee, to the west. It is quite understandable that at a high rate of advance of the troops, the refugees fell into the zone of hostilities as best they could, took cover and, having let the troops through, continued to move west, now behind our troops.

What can I say? In this mournful human stream, in a certain sense, the justice of historical fate was personified...

But with everything else, the flows of refugees that ended up on the roads of our front-line rear blocked all communications so tightly that this led to serious obstacles to the operation of transport. Often even tanks were forced to linger at the crossroads, passing uncontrollable, panic-stricken columns of refugees, among whom were many children and the elderly.

According to the Soviet version, the Germans were forced to leave their own governments at home, threatened with reprisals and frightened by imaginary "Russian atrocities".

General K.N. Galitsky cannot forget how people who believed in fascist propaganda "congested the roads so much that they prevented the German troops from advancing... The German commandants tried to restore order on the roads, but they did not succeed well. In a number of cases, retreating fascist tanks, armored personnel carriers, tractors and trucks crashed into crowds of refugees and crushed them. Soldiers and officers from the Hermann Goering corps treated their fellow citizens especially brutally. Part of the refugees returned to their place

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residence, having already lost property and products. Soviet soldiers fed hungry women and children, warmed them by fires, and helped them cross water barriers." Political workers under the leadership of the philanthropic pastor Okorokov launched campaigning work: "We got to know the local residents, identifying and studying democratic and anti-fascist activists. At their meetings, residents elected local self-government bodies... But the main thing that made the residents believe in their safety, understand the noble mission of the Red Army, was the behavior of Soviet soldiers. Our fighters, commanders, political workers showed deep humanity towards the local population. We helped organize the food supply and eliminate the consequences of heavy fighting, we constantly explained to the population the policy of the Soviet state."

And why did they, stupid, run away? After all, everyone knows: "The Soviet soldier is the most just warrior on earth.

And most importantly, where did they go?

On January 21, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command demanded that the 2nd Belorussian Front, no later than February 2-4, capture the Elbing, Marienburg, Torun line, reach the Vistula in its lower reaches and cut off the enemy all routes to Central Germany. After reaching the Vistula, it was planned to capture bridgeheads on its left bank north of Torun. The troops of the right wing of the front were ordered to capture the Johannisburg, Allenstein, Elbing line. In the future, it was planned to withdraw most of the forces of the front to the left bank of the Vistula for operations in the zone between Danzig and Stettin.

The position of Army Group Center was deteriorating, and the threat of encirclement to the west of Augustow was clearly indicated. Reinhardt's insistent requests for the withdrawal of the 4th Army were still rejected by Hitler. Then General Gossbach, who actually found himself in the ring, made a "desperate decision." On the night of January 22, he began an unauthorized withdrawal of his formations behind the fortifications of the Letzensky fortified area at the turn of the Masurian Lakes, "without experiencing any influence from the enemy." Maneuver not

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was timely discovered by the reconnaissance of the 50th army (69th, 81st rifle corps), the command of which continued to report to the front headquarters that "the enemy is holding strong." Only two days later, reconnaissance in force showed that there was an empty landscape in front of the army. Annoyed Rokossovsky demanded the dismissal of Commander Boldin: "What an omission could not be forgiven .... Incorrect information cost us dearly. We were forced to bring the 49th Army into battle ahead of time, which, if this did not happen, could be used more expediently. And the 50th Army had to force the marches to catch up with the detached enemy. Boldin was removed, the chief of staff of the army (former chief of staff of the Volkhov Front) Lieutenant General F.P. Ozerov.

In the meantime, having looked around at the new position, Gossbach decided not to linger, to leave the defensive lines with the Letzen fortress and the Masurian lake system and make his way to the west to join with the 2nd army of Colonel General Weiss in the southern part of the Heilsberg fortified district. The commander of the 4th Army did not inform either the commander of Army Group Center or the Supreme High Command about the decision. The formations of the army passed the Letzensky fortified area and on January

occupied a long-term fortified position Hejlsberg, Deime. Gauleiter Koch informed Berlin of the abandonment of the line of the Masurian Lakes. At the Fuhrer's headquarters, the announcement of the surrender of "the most powerful stronghold in East Prussia, built with the latest military achievements" caused the effect of an exploding bomb. Hitler, who had finally lost confidence in the generals, became extremely excited, yelled at Guderian and demanded that the "Russian agents" Reinhardt and Gossbach be brought to trial by a military tribunal.

Meanwhile, the retreat of Army Group Center continued.

On January 22, Major General Malakhov's 29th Tank Corps (149 tanks and 111 self-propelled guns) captured the city of Deutsch-Eylau.

Oslikovsky's cavalry corps flew into Allenstein. This railway station has accumulated two dozen esche

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lonov with various cargoes, military equipment, people. The station was filled to capacity with refugees waiting to be sent to the central regions of Germany. The Cossacks seized rich trophies and looted to their heart's content, which was strictly forbidden to do in "allied" Poland.

"To the station of the city of Allenstein," recalls N.N. Nikulin, which the valiant cavalry of General Oslikovsky captured unexpectedly for the enemy, several echelons with German refugees arrived. They thought they were going to their rear, but they got there ... I saw the results of the reception that they received. The station platforms were covered with heaps of gutted suitcases, bundles, trunks. Everywhere clothes, children's things, torn pillows. All this in pools of blood ... "

Millions of armed, brutalized, swearing men, who have forgotten the price of human life, broke into Germany in blood, mud and soot, burning with a thirst for revenge.

Here it is, the country of villains, the country of murderers! Woe to you, Germany!

The crossing of the German frontier by the Red Army was marked by an explosion of violence, looting and wanton destruction. There are many testimonies and "explanations" for this.

Marshal V.I. Chuikov, who commanded the 8th Guards Army, is very careful - this is understandable - writes:

"The fighters expressed their mood in their own way. I happened to see inscriptions on the border posts: "Here it is, Faigist Germany!"

These feelings are understandable, obviously, it was still impossible to separate in the mind of a soldier the country, the people and fascism led by Hitler. The memory of the atrocities of the invaders on our and Polish soil was too fresh. Reading this kind of inscription, I remembered Majdanek ... I also remembered my fears that the rage and anger of a Russian person could spill out on German soil.

Captain A.V. Pylytsyn, company commander of the 8th separate penal battalion, who proudly bore the nickname "Rokossovsky's gang" appropriated by the Germans:

"An all-consuming hatred for the SS, for the Aryans, and in general for everything German, overcame us. This is wrong,

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I understand now, but hatred of enemies sat firmly in our minds then. I recalled catchphrases like "you cannot defeat the enemy without learning to hate him with all the strength of your soul" or "if the enemy does not surrender, he is destroyed." So they learned to hate, sought to destroy. And posters, and newspapers, and movies, and biting publications by Ilya Ehrenburg and other famous



writers were urged: "Kill the German!" We understood, of course, that it was necessary to kill those who came to the land of our Motherland with fire and sword, but, contrary to logic, our hatred extended to all Germans, to everything German, enemy."

N.N. Nikulin, Sergeant of the 13th Guards Corps Artillery Regiment:

"The troops meanwhile crossed the border of Germany. Now the war has turned to meanother unexpected side. Everything seemed to be tested: death, hunger, shelling, overwork, cold. So no! There was something else very terrible, almost crushing me. On the eve of the transition to the territory of the Reich, agitators arrived in the troops. Some are in high ranks.

- Death for death! Blood for blood!!! Let's not forget!!! We won't forgive!!! Let's take revenge!!! - and so on...

Prior to this, Ehrenburg had made a thorough effort, whose crackling, biting articles were read by everyone: "Daddy, kill a German And it turned out to be Nazism in reverse. True, they behaved outrageously according to plan: a network of ghettos, a network of camps. Accounting and compilation of lists of loot. Register of punishments, planned executions, etc. With us, everything went spontaneously, in a Slavic way. Bay, guys, burn, wilderness! Spoil their women! Moreover, before the offensive, the troops were abundantly supplied with vodka. And it's gone, and it's gone! As always, the innocent suffered. Bonzes, as always, fled... Indiscriminately burned houses, killed some random old women, aimlessly shot herds of cows. A joke invented by someone was very popular: "Ivan is sitting near a burning house. "What are you doing?" they ask him. "Yes, the footcloths should have been dried, the fire was kindled" ... Corpses, corpses, corpses. The Germans, of course, are scum, but why be like them? The army has humiliated itself. The nation has humiliated itself. It was the worst thing in the war. Corpses, corpses..."

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Ilya Ehrenburg, who had time everywhere, arrived at the scene and soon published a series of articles on the topic of retribution and justice:

"I spent two weeks in Germany, terrified, burning and smoking. Germans and German women trudge along long roads in the snow or mud. These roads are littered with furniture, utensils, and rags. Cities are burning. Pigs enter empty town halls. The wind ruffles shreds of city banners with eagles, with lions, with deer. We could say: to each his turn, but we are above gloating. Another feeling inspires us: we see the triumph of justice...

The population is trying to escape. Thousands and thousands of wagons are moving west. What is there on these wagons - and chests, and featherbeds, and furniture, and bellies, and earmuffs, and (Under the hay) several Italian carbines, knives issued by kreisleiters with the inscription "All for Germany" or "Blood and Honor" : With these knives Germans and Germans must kill Russians. But then the Red Army cut the path. Thrown not only chairs, but even headphones. Tens of thousands of featherbeds are lying around (the Germans cover themselves with featherbeds); and the down of all the geese from the era of Bismarck to the present day covers East Prussia with a blizzard. As for the Germans and German women, caught by us, they are trying to free themselves not only from knives, but also from their past ... They hastily wring their hats. The girls ingratiatingly and lecherously look at the passing fighters, as if they were not the daughters of burghers, but waiters in a night cabaret ...

None of them can be trusted. Now they seem like sheep, but they were wolves, and they are. They throw out carbines and daggers; but who knows what will happen in a month? The German does not know how to fight on his own initiative, he is waiting for an order. Among the confused, frightened crowds there are people who are entrusted with the organization of sabotage and putschs. Now they are hiding: the fear of their compatriots is too great; need to take a breather. And if they are allowed to catch their breath, if they are not taken into their hands, if they are not looked over, if they are not enlightened by everyone, soon the most obedient, those who shout "mouth front" and trample on images of the Fuhrer, will again begin to rave about the "Great

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Germany" and, obeying the camouflaged Lieutenants or Rottenfuehrers, will take up rifles, bombs, and knives. After all, I did not find true repentance in any of the Germans: fear and pretense.

If you can feel sorry for anyone on the German roads, then only tiny, ignorant children, distraught milkless cows, and abandoned dogs and cats...

Retribution has begun. It will be completed. Nothing else will save robber Germany. The first words of that treaty, which will be called peaceful, are written in the blood of Russia. And for me ... the greatest happiness is to trample on this land of villains and know: it was not chance, not fortune, not speeches and articles that saved the world from fascism, but our people, our army, our heart, our Stalin ...

We are proud that Stalin is not only the greatest commander, but also the first warrior of freedom, the first knight of justice...

The only historical mission, as I see it, modest and worthy, it is to reduce the population of Germany.

Stalin did not write, did not say such words, but in the narrowest circle of his opinion he did not hide his opinion: "The Germans have no morals. They hate what is made by the hand of man. They are just sadists, real barbarians."

A month and a half passed, and it turned out. that "Comrade Ehrenburg simplifies" ...

Ordinary Red Army soldiers, who had never seen waitresses, burghers, or night cabarets, "begged" the question radically: "The enemy's group smells good," especially the enemy with a knife and a bomb in his bosom, who planned "sabotage and coups." "

Beat, burn, rape, everything is possible here! There is no difference between a German and a "fascist," between an SS man and his child—I suppose he also dreams of becoming an SS man. Who here babbles that he is an anti-fascist? Why didn't you, bitch, join the partisans? And why do you have such an SS muzzle? Unlimited hatred extended to all the "Kritz" without exception:

"The hands of every German are in the blood ...

For the first time in front of our people were not people, but

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vicious and vile creatures, savages equipped with all the achievements of technology, monsters acting according to the charter and referring to science, who turned the extermination of infants into the last word of state wisdom ...

Our hatred is even stronger because they look like a person, that they can laugh, they can pet a dog or a horse, that in their diaries they engage in introspection, that they are disguised as people, as cultured Europeans."

Hatred, blind and destructive, aroused German houses and German cities. Even their names "sounded disgusting."

Hatred and disgust were caused by the "vulgar philistine" life, with vases, dinner sets, starched napkins, indispensable portraits of Hitler and pornographic postcards, like all German culture. The Germans, in the concept of the Red Army, lived "in the manor's palaces", where there was parquet, tiles, armchairs, mirrors, pianos, bathrooms, warm closets and heaps of "loot": French curtains, Yugoslav carpets, Dutch linen .. This "wealth" did not cause envy, but only increased the thirst for destruction and led to bewilderment: "Why did these parasites, who have everything, want to take the last thing from us Russians?"

Ehrenburg wrote with disgust: "Next to prosperity, we see savagery everywhere. Every apartment has a library. What wonderful bindings! Just don't open the books - "Mein Kampf" by the cannibal, a collection dedicated to Himmler, "The March on Poland", "Racial Hygiene", "Jewish Plague", "Russian Subhumans", "Our Faithful Prussia"... Squalor, spiritual not a brush. However, it is clear that these books were not read much: the volumes were furnishings, like vases or china cats...

Culture is not determined by vacuum cleaners and meat grinders. We see the hideous face of Germany, and we are proud that we have gutted the lair of a disgusting beast."

The German "village" unpleasantly surprised me with order, strong household and outbuildings, good roads, sewerage and electricity, an abundance of well-fed living creatures, agricultural equipment.

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military equipment and inventory, "and next to it is a barn with cages and bunks for eastern workers." In order to prevent "incorrect political conclusions" on the part of the backward elements about the comparative effectiveness of the "landlord" and socialist forms of management, political workers and the press tirelessly explained to the personnel that the well-being of the "fascists" was the result of the robbery of the occupiers. bathroom of Europe and the Soviet Union, the use of slave labor of Soviet citizens driven to Germany.

Hatred and contempt were caused by "lascivious German females", mothers, wives and sisters of the "executioners".

The fighters enthusiastically destroyed property acquired "criminally": they smashed mirrors and tiles, broke furniture and grand pianos, gutted pillows and featherbeds, went to Sevres services and used lace napkins "for their intended purpose", shot cows and dogs, blew up Houses. They also killed prisoners and "saboteurs", regardless of age and gender, singly and in groups "broke the racial pride" of German women;

"Our scouts, who were at the observation post, took advantage of the lull and indulged in merry entertainment. They locked the owner and the mistress in a closet, and then the whole platoon, in turn, began to spoil the master's young daughters. Petka, knowing that I can't even stand stories about such cases, broadcasted the cries and groans of poor girls to me on the phone, and also told me in detail about what was happening. His juicy comments resembled a football report. He knew that I had no right to hang up, that I would not go to the authorities, because the authorities were sleeping, and you wouldn't surprise him with such incidents - it's a common thing!"

Well, who are the superhumans here? Get up cancer!

"Even the trees were our enemies," one of the Red Army soldiers wrote home from the 3rd Belorussian Front.

Many such letters have been preserved:

"We settle accounts with the Hans and Fritz, and the despicable Frau and their little snakes run wherever their eyes look. Well, we think that they won't run far, we'll find them at the end of the world, as Comrade Stalin said, and we will execute our judgment on the degenerates of mankind ...

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"Their houses are burning, their property is being destroyed, their livestock is going homeless, and they themselves have become homeless. I just want to say to everyone in person: this is for you for our suffering, this is for the suffering of my family and many hundreds of thousands of other families. This is for the death of many hundreds of thousands of Soviet people, for the death of our women and children, whom you ruthlessly destroyed, not counting them as people and treating them like animals. With deep disgust you look at these degenerates of mankind - let them be men, women, children. The men were

the direct perpetrators of these atrocities, women helped them in this, if not physically, then morally, and the children prepared to perform the same atrocities as their fathers, considering themselves to be "above all" ...

"There are enough German women, you don't need to persuade them, you just put on the revolver and command: "Logies", you do your job and move on."

It got to the point that in the Reich, where abortion was categorically prohibited, doctors were allowed to "interrupt pregnancies of women raped by the Bolsheviks."

Tremble, Germany! Russians are coming!

Cities burned and farms burned.

The "liberated" Allenstein was on fire, where Major L.3 arrived on the instructions of the political department of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Kopelev:

"The city almost did not suffer from bombing and shelling. But fires started on the first night. On one of the central squares, a four-story trading house was burning brightly, fumingly, in which there were several different shops: haberdashery, furniture, grocery... They didn't have time to either evacuate it or plunder it. Behind the large showcases, sofas, armchairs, and wardrobes were aflame. The fire rushed about noisily, motley, every now and then something exploded, burst... Along the sidewalk, several streams of bluish flame flowed into a narrow brick ditch. There was a suffocating smell of burnt sugar.

Niedenburg burned. "It was light from the fires in the city: entire blocks were on fire. And here ours were set on fire. The town is not big. The sidewalks are lined with branched trees. On one of the side streets, under the patterned fence of the front garden,

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the corpse of an old woman was stinging: a torn dress, between her skinny legs - an ordinary landline phone. They tried to insert a tube into the perineum. Soldiers in groups and one by one slowly walked from house to house, some dragging bundles or suitcases. One loquaciously explained that this German woman was a spy, she was caught on the phone, and they didn't talk for a long time.

Gumbinnen and Friedland were on fire, captured by units of the 28th Army. The commander of the 13th trophy battalion M.F. Kossinsky:

"The operation to take Gumbinnen, which is especially memorable to me because our battalion entered the city at the same time as the assault units, ended on January 21, 1945. The city was relatively little damaged during the assault, but immediately after our arrival, fires began. Few residents remained in Gumbinnen, and several Wehrmacht soldiers were caught. Perhaps it was they who set fire to residential buildings, but, on the other hand, our fighters did not spare foreign cities, and there were cases of arson by them. These cases were explained by "sacred revenge for the cities and villages of our country burned by the Germans". One way or another, the fires began to devastate the city. When we left Gumbinnen, we had to pass by the royal castle, built in the 17th century and dominating the city. When the city was occupied, the castle was still intact. But now it, too, was engulfed in flames... Friedland was also almost intact when we entered, but even here fires immediately started."

Soldau was on fire, along the streets of which the 137th rifle division of the 48th army marched. Commander M.P. Serebrov:

"Everything, it would seem, was explained, and here you are. In Soldau, a patrol stops a soldier with a torch in his hand, walks rather calmly, with a confident gait, and sets fire to house after house. He managed to set fire to three already, then he was detained by a patrol. We have just explained that we are marching with humane goals, as warriors-liberators, and here is such a case. Before punishing him, I decided to listen to what

the reason prompted the soldier to set fire to the houses. In a conversation with him, it turned out that he comes from some Ukrainian village, has been walking through the fields of war for four

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This year, he was wounded more than once, he has awards. When walking along the roads of war, he quite often came across a poster on which a girl was depicted and the inscription: "Dad, kill a German!", and says: "During this time I killed quite a lot of Germans, there were houses that I burn ten. We ask what is the reason? "My mother, wife, three-year-old daughter stayed at home, I recently received a letter saying that when the punishers broke into my village, they burned everything, my mother was shot, my wife too, and my little daughter was left alive. into the fire. When I found out about this tragedy, I swore to myself that I would burn ten houses, but I didn't have time, I was detained by patrols." And after all these words the soldier wept bitterly.

What were we to do? We shared his grief with him, I scolded him a little that it was wrong to do this, and sent him to my Unit ... "

The city of Schwerin, according to General V.A. Belyavsky, was left by the Germans without a fight: "Not only soldiers and officers, but also the civilian population were afraid to be in our hands. It went west along with the retreating army. When we entered Schwerin, the city was completely empty. There are no more than two dozen old men and women left in it." Together with units of the 8th Guards Army, the writer Vasily Grossman ended up in Schwerin:

"The city was on fire, but the robberies continued... A woman jumped out of the window of a burning apartment... The fires continued all night... A woman dressed in mourning and a young girl came to the commandant of the city. The girl's face, neck, hands were covered with bruises. In a weak voice, the woman told that this girl had been raped by a soldier from the headquarters communications company. That soldier was also present here. He had a thick red face and sleepy eyes."

The wildest crimes were justified by hatred:

"After moving a nondescript bridge," recalls A.V. Poltsyn, — across a no less unprepossessing rivulet, we saw a large stand with what seems to be the inscription: "Here it is, accursed Germany", and immediately after the bridge, at the turn of the road, a standard pole with a surviving still German

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with a sign: "Vetl...Kt" and a little tablet already tied by one of ours with a catchy inscription in Russian: "To Berlin!"

We drove a little more and suddenly, in front of the entrance to some village, we saw several parked cars and a group of military men near them. We stopped too. We went with Rita and Fermanyuk to see if we could go further. They came closer and ... were dumbfounded by the terrible sight: five or six naked human corpses were laid across the road, among which were women, a teenager and even a child of 6-7 years old. Apparently it was family. They lay face up, strictly in a row, and their bodies were pressed into the ground. Judging by the traces of tank tracks, some of our tankers thus avenged Germany for the fascist atrocities on our soil, and maybe for his family who died at the hands of the Nazis...

... Rita turned away, buried her face in my shoulder, her body began to tremble with suppressed sobs. I took her to our cars and tried to calm her down. And she kept repeating through her sobs: "Well, why is it so! Well, why!!!"

And in this tanker who committed such a crime, I thought, she probably spoke not just hatred, but inhuman malice, which can still be understood, but cannot be justified! Of course, the war went through each of us with that very bloody German boot. Everyone knew and remembered how SS flayers and thugs tortured women and children, burned them alive and

hanged, killed them in gas chambers. It is impossible to forget this even through the centuries. Forgive is the same. But we are not fascists, we cannot be like them.

Yes, of course, we hated the Nazis boundlessly. And it was difficult to somehow reduce the height of this hatred, especially when our enemies entered the land ...

We still remembered the oaths over the graves of combat friends - to take revenge.

Senior Lieutenant L.N. Rabichev, commander of the communications platoon of the 31st Army Directorate:  
"Trautenau... We go into the , them rooms, two dead women and three dead girls, house. Three pains are all pulled up, and empty wine bottles stick out between the toenails. I walk along the wall of the house, the second

door, corridor, door and two more adjoining rooms, each

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one of the beds, and there are three of them, are dead women with spread legs and bottles.

Well, suppose they were all raped and shot. The pillows are covered in blood. But where does this sadistic desire to stick bottles come from? Our infantry, our tankers, village and city guys, everyone in their homeland has families, mothers, sisters.

The violence committed by the Soviet troops against the civilian population, the killing of prisoners strengthened the determination of the Wehrmacht soldiers to fight to the last opportunity, to the last bullet, to the last drop of blood. The losses of the Red Army increased sharply and equaled the losses of 1941 - 23.2 thousand people, 105 tanks and 102 aircraft daily.

All the more reason for revenge. From the leaflet of the political department of the 5th Guards Tank Army on the death of Major P.P. Redko: "Tov. Redko with his unit was a thunderstorm for the German fascist invaders. He destroyed the "tigers" and "panthers", smashed the manpower of the enemy and his equipment. He beat the Nazis in Ukraine, the Baltic states and East Prussia. He was brave and brave in battle, knew no fear, never backed down...

We will avenge the death of Major Pyotr Prokofievich Redko!"

And no refugees, "tightly clogged communications", could prevent the tankers from completing their task. Just a few of the many episodes collected in the archives by the German historian Joachim Hoffmann:

"In West Prussia, in an unspecified locality, at the end of January, a long convoy of refugees was overtaken by advanced Soviet tank detachments. According to several female survivors, tankers (of the 5th Guards Tank Army) doused the horses and wagons with petrol and set them on fire: already looked like living torches. After that, the Bolsheviks opened fire. Only a few managed to escape." Similarly, in Plonen at the end of January 1945, the tanks of the 5th Guards Tank Army attacked and shot down a refugee column. All women from 13 to 60

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For years, from this settlement, located near Elbing, the Red Army soldiers incessantly raped "in the most cruel way." German soldiers from a tank reconnaissance found one such woman with the lower part of her stomach torn open with a bayonet, and another young woman on a wooden plank bed with a smashed face. Destroyed and plundered carts of refugees on both sides of the road, the corpses of passengers lying nearby in a roadside ditch, were also found in Maislatine near Elbign.

According to a report from Army Group Center, on January 22, in the Velau area, tanks of the 2nd Guards Tank Corps, clearing the way for the 11th Guards Army, "overtook, fired on with tank shells and machine-gun bursts" a column of refugees 4 kilometers long, "mostly women and children", and the rest were "laid down by submachine gunners". General Galitsky, telling how he took old women across the road and transported them through water barriers, "confused" Bourdeiny's corps with the Hermann Goering.

Goebbels very accurately noted that the Soviet soldiers were gradually inspired by the same sense of superiority over the outside world, as, at one time, the German ones: "They present themselves as the great saviors of the world; it is noteworthy that Bolshevik propaganda has instilled in them a kind of superiority complex over other people, and as a result they commit the most senseless bloodshed.

In addition, the Supreme Commander allowed Germany to plunder, effectively legalizing looting. C | In January 1945, the famous order No. 28] "On organizing the reception and delivery of parcels from Red Army soldiers, sergeants, officers and generals" came into force. Once a month, "well-performing" soldiers and sergeants were allowed to send home parcels weighing up to 5 kg free of charge, officers for a small fee - twice as much, generals - up to 16

kg.

The issue was approached seriously, in a state-like way. On each of the nine fronts that "liberated" Europe, one special military mail echelon was formed, consisting of 16 wagons and 25 guards and service personnel. On each of

hundreds of military mail

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stations, additional officer staffs were opened to organize departments and departments of parcels. All non-commissioned officers and officers involved in the acceptance and delivery of parcels from the fronts were given a 25% increase in salaries. Warehouses were created at large military units to store the looted, guilty, "ownerless property". The commanders of formations for the delivery of valuable cargo to the railway were obliged to allocate transport and security. Since the troops of the Leningrad Front fought on Soviet territory, where there was nothing to take and nothing to send, except for their own footcloths, the formation of a "special train" was not envisaged for them.

The initiative found a warm response in the hearts of both the rank and file and the commanding staff. The material situation of the relatives of the "liberators" in the rear, devastated by the war, was catastrophic. At the end of 1944, 40% of workers and employees received 500 grams of bread a day. It was even worse in the countryside. Gam the daily norm of bread consumption was covered only by 80%, the need for consumer goods was satisfied by a quarter. Parcels and money transfers from soldiers allowed their families to somehow make ends meet. The army enthusiastically began to "trophy". Everything that fit in a box or suitcase "not exceeding 70 cm in each of three dimensions" was sent home: shoes, clothes, fabrics, underwear, food, soap, tea, chocolate, forgotten sweets...

Konstantin Simonov recalls: "I was standing together with Mekhlis and Isaev, and we, I don't remember why, started talking about soldiers sending home from the front. Isaev told that many soldiers send glass home - they cover the glass with boards and bring it - because they were told from home that there was no glass. And at the post office they don't accept the parcel - it's impossible, it doesn't fit in size, and besides, it beats.

- Come on, take it! says the soldier. - Come on, take it! The Germans broke my house. Take the parcel, otherwise you are not the mail, if you do not accept it.

Many send bags of nails, also for a new ha-

You. And one brought a saw rolled into a circle. "Would you wrap it in something," they told him on mail.

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- Take it, take it, what's there! I have no time, I'm from the front.

- Where's your address?

— The address is written on the saw, see?

And indeed, there, on a saw, an address was written with an indelible pencil.

"The country Germany has come - a solid suitcase."

The question arises. What, Stalin, with his rich experience of the civil war, did not understand that outrages, lynching and robbery turn any army into a band of robbers? Have you really forgotten how the Red Army fought against "partisanism" or demonstrative executions brought to life the 1st Horse after its raid on Ukraine in the fall of 1920?

No, he understood everything, and he remembered everything. Well, something, but Iosif Vissarionovich did not suffer from forgetfulness. And did nothing in vain. When making any decision, the Leader always aimed at least two birds with one stone.

Stalin understood that the army, tired of the war, was no longer affected by the slogans of defending the Fatherland on foreign territory. Therefore, in order to raise morale before the last throw, he allowed the soldiers to quench their thirst for revenge, and at the same time added a material incentive.

"A warrior must be understood," said Comrade Stalin. "Imagine a man who marches with battles from Stalingrad to Belgrade — thousands of kilometers across his devastated land, seeing the death of his comrades and those closest to him! Can such a person react normally? And what's the big deal if he messes with a woman after such horrors? The main thing is that the Red Army beat the Germans, "everything else is secondary."

Therefore, the lieutenant colonel from the political department of the 50th Army, who instructed his junior colleague Major Kopelev, understood everything correctly:

"This cursed war is tired of all of us, and the soldiers who walk under bullets are the most. Well, while they were fighting on our land, everything was simple - they fought for their huts in order to drive away, recapture, release ... And the soldier, who has been under bullets for the fourth year already and wounded, maybe more than once, knows , what is his house

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but oh where... Both the woman and the hungry children... Aim to fight everything, and now it's not on the defensive, but come on, come on! We are materialists, we must understand. So what is needed? So that the soldier, firstly, hates the enemy, so that he wants to take revenge, but not somehow, but in such a way that he wants to destroy everything to the root ... It is also necessary that he has an interest in fighting, so that he knows why to climb out from a trench to a machine gun, to mines. And now it is clear and understandable to him: he will come to Germany, and there everything will be his - both junk and women, and do what you want! Bay vschent! So that their grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be afraid... Not everyone will kill children... But in truth, if you want to know, then those who will, let them kill at least little fritzes in the heat of the moment, until they get tired of themselves .. Now it is necessary that the soldier still wants to fight, that he goes into battle ... This is the main link!

In addition, the opportunity to "play pranks" was provided for a relatively short time, because they planned to take Berlin to | Martha.



At the same time, by simple methods and unnecessary expenses (soldier's blood does not count) an important political task was solved: the expulsion of 15 million Germans from the territories declared "originally Slavic" - Prussia, Eastern Pomerania, the environs of Danzig, Silesia. It so happened that it was here that the majority of murders and other crimes against civilians were recorded. The Allies had already agreed that at the end of the war, during a peace conference, these lands would be "returned" to the Poles, Czechs and Russians; the German population had to move to the "historical role". In peacetime, the process of deportation could drag on for years, then one would really have to deal with the restoration of the German administration, the food supply of the Fritz, ensure their safety, and organize transportation.

And so everything turned out very well. Frightened by the "Goebbels propaganda" and impressed by the "profound humanity of our soldiers", the Germans, leaving vacuum cleaners and meat grinders, fled en masse to the west. With those who still considered themselves local and did not think of leaving by "self-delivery", the political department

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ly and Smersh carried out "denification" - they shot members of the NSDAP, the Todt organization, the Hitler Youth, the Volksstorm, village elders, who were called Ostbauernfuhrers, foresters, policemen, railway workers, everyone who wore a uniform (and who didn't wear a Reich?) or was considered a potential "partisan". In addition, by order of the State Defense Committee, from February 3, 1945, the mobilization and internment of all German men and women fit for physical labor aged 17 to 50 began on the territory of the Reich "with a direction to work in the USSR." This was called - Elk "the collection of reparations by labor." From the territory of Yugoslavia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Volksdeutsche began to be exported straight to the mines of Donbass in December 1944.

And already on February 7 in Yalta, in response to Churchill's concern about the future eviction of "such a number of Germans" - in the conversation it was only about six million - Stalin reassured the prime minister: there is no problem, "in those parts of Germany occupied by the Red Army, there is almost no German population. The parties also unanimously agreed that the more Germans were destroyed before the end of the war, the better for them: "there must be enough space in Germany for the resettled".

Here, by the way, is the third "hare": the hungry, homeless, millions of dispossessed had to be fed by the British and Americans, and there, you see, against the backdrop of poverty and disasters of the masses, a revolutionary situation would ripen. Kremlin geopoliticians did not lose hope for "unleashing proletarian revolutions in Europe" in the post-war period.

It can be said that Goebbels, with his cries about the "atrocities of the Bolsheviks," played into the hands of Stalin.

It was only from the first days of the January offensive that the Soviet command, along with the "high fighting impulse" of the troops, began to note with concern the rapid decline in discipline and disintegration.

Nikolai Nikulin came to Germany with rear units, acting as foreman of the team of convalescent sanitary companies:

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"When the team entered the "lair of the fascist beast," as the inscription on the border with Germany said, the general trends also penetrated to us. Campaigns began for junk, trips to the German women, and there was no power to prevent them. I persuaded, begged, threatened... They sent me away or simply didn't understand me. The team is out of control...

"Everyone has the right to send a parcel home once a month weighing twelve kilograms," the authorities officially announced. And it's gone, and it's gone! Drunk Ivan broke into a bomb shelter,

he banged the machine gun on the table and, terribly gouging out his eyes, yelled: "URRRRR! Bastards! Trembling German women carried watches from all sides, which they raked into the "sidor" and carried away. Rob! Grab it! Like an epidemic, this scourge swept over everyone ... then they came to their senses, but it was too late: the devil flew out of the bottle. Kind, affectionate Russian men have turned into monsters. They were terrible alone, but in the herd they became such that it is impossible to describe! ..

Petrov (that was the name of the postman), who seemed so nice to me, at the end of the war revealed himself as a criminal, marauder and rapist. In Germany, he told me, as an old friend, how many gold watches and bracelets he managed to rob, how many German women he ruined. It was from him that I heard the first story from an endless series of stories on the topic "ours abroad". This story at first seemed to me a monstrous fiction, outraged me and therefore forever stuck in my memory: "I come to the battery, atam old firemen are preparing a feast. They cannot move away from the gun, they are not supposed to. Right on the bed, they spin dumplings from trophy flour, and on the other bed, they take turns playing with a German woman who was dragged from somewhere. The foreman disperses them with a stick:

"Stop, you old fools!" Do you want to bring the infection to your grandchildren there?!

He takes the German woman away, leaves, and twenty minutes later everything starts again."

Another story of Petrov about himself:

"I am walking past a crowd of Germans, looking after a prettier woman, and suddenly I look: there is a Frau with a daughter of fourteen years old. Pretty, and on her chest like a sign, it says:

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"drill 5\$" means for us not to be touched. Ahty, bastards, I think, I take the girl by the hand, my mother with a machine gun in the snout, and vkusta. Let's check what kind of syphilis you have! The girl turned out to be appetizing ... "

It was necessary to somehow curb the rapidly running wild army.

Already on January 22, Marshal Rokossovsky signed order No. 006, which stated that "with robberies, looting, arson, mass drunkenness is observed ... cars are loaded with all kinds of household items, seized food and civilian clothing to such an extent that they have become a burden for the troops, limit their freedom of movement and reduce the striking power of tank formations..." The order demanded the establishment of "exemplary order and iron discipline" and provided for punishment, up to and including execution, for "these shameful phenomena for the Red Army" .

Five days later, Marshal Konev had to sign a similar order when, during an inspection, tanks were found so full of junk that there was no room for the crew.

Uselessly! Ehrenburg's articles fit better on the soul, and hatred received new fuel: "The war went through every bloody German boot."

Almost every soldier and officer had a personal account. He only got bigger. They walked across the devastated land, saw burnt Soviet cities, burned corpses of children, gallows and execution ditches, lost relatives, friends, comrades. From former prisoners of the Nazi camps, from compatriots driven to the Reich, they learned more and more new details about the "new order". Then came the "factories of death" with ovens, gas chambers, stacks of corpses and living skeletons: "In my memory, pictures of the square in front of the barracks, strewn with the corpses of executed Jews, were preserved, and in the barracks we found several hundred survivors. There were skeletons covered in leather. They looked at me with huge dark eyes, in which there was not even fear, but

horror, despair and death. This look I could not forget all my life.

On January 27, troops of the 60th Army stumbled upon a network of concentration camps around Auschwitz. Medical experiments were carried out here. Here is a scientific note from the SS doctor S. Rascher to Reichsführer Himmler:

"I am currently working on the problem of proving in human experience that people who are frozen on land can be warmed up just as quickly as those who have cooled down from a long stay in the water. So far, I have cooled about 30 people in their clothes for 9-14 hours to a temperature of 27-29 degrees. After that, after a certain period of time, which would correspond to the transportation time of one hour, I placed the subjects in a hot bath ...

For such experiments, Auschwitz is in all respects more suitable than Dachau, since it is colder here and the territory is larger. Then it will attract less attention to itself (subjects scream when they freeze)."

And what do you want to do if the vivisection of animals is prohibited in the Reich? Besides, according to the estimate, gypsies in every way come out cheaper than chimpanzees. When Himmler decided to present Nazism "with a human face" to the West and began his games with Count Bernadotte and Jewish organizations, he himself ordered the liquidation of the "genius" somewhere in a secluded place.

"For the torment of the children of the fascist, kill."

"I'm going to punish the Nazis - for the murdered mother"

"The retribution will be cruel for every brother killed."

"We have all become more bloodthirsty," Stalin said in a conversation with Roosevelt.

The composition of the Red Army has changed. There are not so many "Russian people" left in it, although it has become fashionable to address each other: "Slavs!"

Marching reinforcements now came mainly from the western territories of the USSR - young people who had already grown up under the occupation, the conscripts of 1941 who fled and settled in the villages, "encircled", convicted under criminal articles, former prisoners of war, former partisans and former

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faces. Only in Belarus, according to official data, 19 thousand policemen became "fighters of partisan formations". In November 1944, the GKO adopted a resolution to send servicemen and Soviet citizens of military age released from German captivity directly to reserve military units, bypassing the special camp. They underwent a seven-day training course and were sent to active units. From the officers, "smeared" by captivity, assault battalions were completed. The survivors will be filtered after the war.

So, by the beginning of the operation, the 2nd Belorussian Front received: from among those mobilized in the regions of Western Ukraine, Moldavia, the Baltic States - 53,000 people, from former prisoners of war - 10,254 people, fined - 5290 people, from rear - 20,000 people, from hospitals - 39 006 Human.

Of course, "not everyone" killed German children and raped women. The political workers did their best to minimize the scale of the crimes committed by the liberators, reducing everything to individual excesses: "Of course, there were cases of violence, robbery - in any army there are criminals, hooligans, drunkards, but our command fought against acts of violence." It was still possible to lay responsibility on German saboteurs who put on Soviet uniforms.

There was also a lot of vodka and a feeling of absolute impunity.

Fathers-commanders not only did not restrain their subordinates, "but they themselves supported such acts of violence and participated in them to a large extent."

The more stars there were on the generals, the larger and especially large sizes they "trophyed" - cars, planes, wagons.

For G.K. Zhukov, already in the "liberated" Lodz, the safe of a jewelry store was broken. The Greatest Commander himself turned out to be a marauder, allowing actions that "dishonor the high rank of a member of the CPSU (b) and the honor of the commander of the Soviet Army, engaging in the appropriation and exportation from Germany for personal needs of a large number of various valuables":

"For these purposes, Comrade Zhukov, having given free rein to the unbridled craving for

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money-grubbing, used his subordinates, who, servile to him, went to obvious crimes, took away paintings and other valuables in palaces and mansions. As a result, the Zhukovs appropriated up to 70 valuable gold items (pendants and rings with precious stones, watches, diamond earrings, bracelets, brooches, etc.), up to 740 items of silverware and silver utensils, and, in addition, even up to 30 kg of silver items.

Ehrenburg contemptuously looked at the situation on the estates of the German barons, and how his descriptions differ from the protocol of the secret search of Marshal Zhukov's dacha dated January 9, 1947:

"All furnishings, from furniture, carpets, crockery, ornaments to window curtains, are foreign, mostly German. There is literally not a single thing of Soviet origin in the dacha, with the exception of the paths that lie at the entrance to the dacha. There is not a single Soviet book in the dacha. But in the bookcases there are a large number of books in beautiful gold-embossed bindings, exclusively in German. Entering the house, it is hard to imagine that you are near Moscow, and not in Germany."

I wonder if Racial Hygiene wasn't on those shelves, by any chance? Or the "Jewish Plague"?

It's hard to imagine Eisenhower shipping silverware to the States.

Much depended on the commanders, and many tried to stop the orgy. But it was not safe, it was possible to get a bullet in the back, as the commander of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade, Hero of the Soviet Union Colonel V.M. Gorelov.

Samvel Matevosyan on June 22, 1941 led the first counterattack in the Brest Fortress, went through captivity, underground, filtration, returned to the army as an officer, in 1945 he fought in Silesia in the 6th Infantry Division:

"About 900 people received reinforcements, the vast majority of whom did not serve in the army. These were former boys taken from Belarus and Ukraine to Germany. Now grown up, having passed the school of hatred for

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enemy. They did not even have time to change into military uniforms. Before the formation, I said: "There may be some of you who are dissatisfied with the Soviet government, but I forbid you to shoot me in the back of the head!"

The problem was not solved until the end of the war.

After the war, no one wanted to remember this, very few dared to look in the mirror:

"We wrote, shouted about sacred revenge. But who were the avengers and whom did we take revenge on? Why did there turn out to be so many bandits among our soldiers who en masse raped women, girls, sprawled in the snow, in gateways, killed the unarmed, crushed everything that they could not carry away, crap, burned? And destroyed senselessly, just to destroy. How did all this become possible?

Millions of people have been brutalized, corrupted by Hitlerism, by the war itself, and by our own militant, nationalist, deceitful propaganda. Such propaganda was necessary on the eve and even more so during the war, I did not doubt it then, but I understood that it would bear poisoned fruits...

What will come of these soldiers, of these, who, in dozens of queues for one German woman, raped girls, killed old women? They will return to our cities, to our girls. This is worse than any shame. These are hundreds and thousands of ready-made criminals, cruel and arrogant, doubly dangerous, because they have a reputation as heroes."

There is no war without atrocities, especially a "religious" war.

In the meantime, in the main direction, units of the 5th Guards Tank Army, sweeping away scattered enemy units and columns of refugees on their way, bypassing strongholds, were advancing unceasingly towards Frisches-Huff Bay.

On January 24, the 10th Panzer Corps occupied Mühlhausen. Further, moving along the coast, the tankers, in cooperation with formations of the 48th Army, captured the city of Tolkemit and blocked Elbing, thus cutting off the enemy's escape route from East Prussia to the west.

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The 2nd Shock Army (98th, 108th, 116th Rifle Corps, 30th Guards Tank Brigade), together with tankers, stormed Deutsch-Eylau, with a fight overcame the defensive line on the outskirts of Marienburg, on January 25 reached the Vistula rivers and Nogat and crossed these water barriers on the move. The next day, regiments of the 372nd Infantry Division and brigades of the 8th Mechanized Corps broke into the eastern outskirts of Marienburg. The forward detachments of the 5th Panzer Army reached the outskirts of Elbing. It was not possible to take the city "with a bang", the detachment of the 31st brigade of the 29th tank corps that broke into Elbing was cut off by the Germans and completely destroyed. By that time, the tank army had 169 serviceable combat vehicles left, and the 29th tank corps had 72.

The armies of the right wing of the 2nd Byelorussian Front, pursuing the elusive enemy, advanced up to 100 kilometers and basically overcame the system of Masurian lakes. The armies of the left wing reached the Vistula in the sector of Marienburg, Torun: the 65th Army (46th, 105th, 18th Rifle Corps) reached the Vistula near Grudenets and proceeded to force the river, the 70th Army (47th, 96th, 114th rifle corps) bypassed the fortress of Torun and also reached the Vistula.

On January 26, the Center group was renamed Army Group North, and the North group was renamed Army Group Courland. Generals Reinhardt and Gossbach flew down from their posts. The command of the North group was taken by Colonel General Lothar Rendulich, "smart and well-read, resourceful in dealing with Hitler", who received a strict order from the Führer to defend Königsberg and what was left of East Prussia to the last. At the head of the 4th Army was General of Infantry Wilhelm Müller.

German resistance rose sharply. In the following days, fierce fighting unfolded on both sides of the wedge driven by the Soviet armies. The troops of the 2nd Shock Force sought to expand the corridor to the west and push the enemy back behind the Vistula and its right tributary, the Nogat River. Units of the 5th Guards Tank and 48th Armies were pushing the eastern part of the wedge into the depths of East Prussia. Army groups "Vistula" and "North", respectively, sought to lock

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lick the gap and reconnect with each other. The situation worsened. The Soviet troops suffered losses and needed rest, the rear fell behind. Most of the airfields of Vershinin's air army turned out to be at a considerable distance from the troops, the ensuing slush made it difficult to use them.

On the night of January 27, the troops of the German 4th Army, with the forces of four infantry and one tank divisions, went on the offensive in the direction of Liebstadt and Elbing. They managed to push the troops of the 48th Army 20 kilometers to the west and encircle the 17th Rifle Division of Colonel A.F. Grebneva southwest of Wordmitt. For two days, continuous fighting continued. The Germans captured Liebstadt and continued their persistent attacks to the west of this city. "We must pay tribute to Muller," Gorbатов admits, "he acted quite skillfully."

Rokossovsky reinforced the army of General Gusev with the 8th Guards Tank Corps and five anti-tank artillery brigades. The 5th Guards Tank Army and the 8th Mechanized Corps, part of the forces of the 2nd Shock Army, were deployed to the east. The 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps prepared with its main forces to deliver a flank attack. The rifle corps of the 49th Army was transferred from the front reserve to the 48th Army. Rokossovsky managed to stop the enemy by a quick regrouping of forces and means in the threatened direction, and then to deliver a tangible blow to him. On January 30, the Germans made their last attempt to break through, but were unsuccessful. The troops allocated to repulse the counterattack created a dense front, and then, resuming the offensive, released the 17th Rifle Division, which was fighting in the encirclement, and threw the enemy formations back to their original position.

During the period of struggle against the counterattack grouping of the enemy, the 50th, 49th and 3rd Armies continued the offensive together with the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, squeezing the Heilsberg grouping. Its situation worsened even more on January 31, when the formations of the 31st Army, Lieutenant General P.G. Shafranov stormed the strongest stronghold

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that - the city of Heilsberg. The narrowing of the offensive lines of the armies as they advanced allowed Rokossovsky to withdraw into his reserve, first two divisions of the 50th Army, and on January 3] the entire 49th Army.

By the end of the month, the 2nd shock, 65th and 70th armies reached the Nogat and Vistula rivers in a wide sector, from Frisches-Haff to Bydgoszcz.

Fedyuninsky's army partly went over to the defensive on a more than 100-kilometer front, concentrating the main forces on capturing three points, whose key position was appreciated by the knights of the Teutonic Order - Elbing, Marienburg and Marienwerder.

January 26 is considered the official date of the "liberation" of Marienburg, but for another ten days the old castle towering over the city, the residence of the Grand Masters, held out; the powerful walls of the crusaders' stronghold could not penetrate 203-mm cannons even from a distance of 150 meters. Marienwerder was abandoned by the Germans on the orders of Himmler on 30 January. But the main target of the 2nd Shock Army was Elbing, a large industrial center and communications center, the last strong center of resistance on the way to the Danzig Bay. Attack on the move, without reconnaissance and artillery support, the German garrison, which consisted of the remnants of a large number of broken units totaling 10,000 cadets, soldiers and officers and up to 4,000 Volkshurmovtsy, repulsed. Having blockaded the city with units of the 98th and 116th rifle corps, General Fedyuninsky began preparing a massive assault using the largest calibers. To solve the problem, 3 rifle divisions, 3 self-propelled artillery regiments and 3 artillery divisions were allocated. The number of personnel in rifle divisions by that time had decreased from 7,500 to 5-6 thousand people. Therefore, all hope was on the "god of war" under the control of General K.P. Kazakov:

"As in all cities of East Prussia, the enemy made extensive use of stone buildings and basements for the defense of Elbing, the windows of which were reinforced with concrete and turned into narrow embrasures. Main streets behind the barricades

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torn and mined. The fire of guns, mortars, machine guns is planned so that it mutually blocks all approaches to strong points at street intersections.

Such a defense, when on a relatively small area there are many massive stone houses turned into firing points, of course, has weak points. If ordinary fortified areas with their reinforced concrete pillboxes and bunkers can be defended with small forces, then in the city the defending side must have numerous infantry. Otherwise, all these firing points - especially large houses - become vulnerable. In addition, the defenders are very space-constrained. The sector of fire, as a rule, is limited to neighboring buildings. As soon as the advancing side invades the city, it begins to use the cluster of houses, lanes, courtyards and underground sewers for their own purposes, to bypass the enemy from the rear. The leading role in street combat is played by artillery placed on direct fire. If it is numerous, if the combat formations of the infantry storming the city are saturated with guns and mortars, the success of the assault is largely predetermined.

We had such artillery. Created assault groups. They usually consisted of a platoon of riflemen - 12-15 people, they were assigned, that is, passed under the command of the commander of the assault group, 4-8 guns for direct fire, as well as 2-4 self-propelled artillery mounts. In addition, the assault group or several groups were supported by carrying out their requests, heavy guns - up to 203-mm howitzers inclusive. In total, we had more than 200 guns of various calibers put up for direct fire. And the entire artillery group that stormed Elbing consisted of 1084 artillery and mortar barrels."

The assault began on 3 February. In addition to artillery and self-propelled guns, Soviet troops in the battles for Elbing widely used smoke bombs and Molotov cocktails.

The army of General Batov (18th, 46th, 105th rifle corps) crossed the Vistula, seizing a bridgehead near the city of Sve

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tse. At the same time, the Germans, relying on Graudenz, retained a foothold on the east bank.

The army of General Popov (47th, 96th, 114th rifle corps) expanded its bridgehead north of Bydgoszcz. Stubborn battles unfolded during the liquidation of the garrison of the fortress city of Torun. Mistakenly estimating the size of the Torun garrison at 3-4 thousand people, the commander of the 70th Army allocated one rifle division to blockade the city. On the night of January 31, the Germans broke through the front of the blockade with a sudden blow in a narrow section of the northwestern sector. To eliminate the forces that had broken through, General Popov had to involve six rifle divisions, including two that arrived from the front reserve, as well as part of the forces of the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps, Major General M.F. Panov. Southeast of Chełmno, the escaped grouping was first dismembered, and on February 8 it was defeated. Up to 12 thousand soldiers and officers were captured, over 270 serviceable guns were captured as trophies.

On February 10, Fedyuninsky's army broke the resistance of the Elbing garrison. In these battles, a unique woman who fought at the front since 1941 distinguished herself, the commander of the sniper squad of the 284th rifle regiment of the 86th rifle division, foreman N.P. Petrov. She destroyed 32 enemy soldiers and officers, bringing her personal account of the killed enemies to a full hundred, and became a full holder of the Order of Glory. There are only four such cavalier girls in the history of the Red Army, only Nina Pavlovna was 52 years old!

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front completed cutting off the East Prussian grouping of the enemy and at the same time created a solid internal front from the southwest. However, it was a success at the limit of strength. For twenty-seven days of continuous battle, the Rokossovsky front lost almost all tanks and 160 thousand personnel:

"With great difficulty, our troops crossed the line abroad. The thaw made the offensive even more difficult. But the main reason was the small number of our troops. The enemy forces were superior to ours, and if we still managed to push him under such circumstances, then it was dock

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a testament to the high art of commanders and mass heroism of soldiers.

Our units have been in continuous offensive battles for a month now. And before there was a shortage in personnel, now people have completely diminished. No matter how clever we were, we did not manage to create, even for a short time, an advantage in forces and means in some sectors, without which it was impossible to break through the enemy defenses. The fighting was stubborn, but we only pressed the enemy troops. As this progressed, the width of the front expanded. Our troops stretched out into a string, and still we could not fill the gap between our left wing and the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front ... The enemy more and more often switched to counterattacks. Our units fought them off with difficulty.

As before, the situation remained very difficult: half of the troops of the front were turned to the east - against the East Prussian grouping, the second half was advancing to the west. With all our might, we tried to keep up with our left neighbor. But he was already approaching the Oder River in the Kustra direction. We couldn't keep up with him. Having regrouped in the process of fighting part of the forces from the right wing to the left, we managed to move a little more to the west, and here we completely died out.

The plan of the commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front on January 24 provided for the concentration of the main efforts on the right wing and in the center. Four armies - the 39th, 11th Guards, 5th, 28th - were to strike along both banks of the Pregel River, capture Königsberg, a city with half a million inhabitants, "the heart of German Prussianism", to which to pass only 50 kilometers, and further develop the offensive on Elbing.

The task of directly capturing the capital of East Prussia was entrusted to the armies of Lyudnikov and Galitsky, reinforced by two tank corps and three breakthrough artillery divisions. The 39th Army was instructed to bypass Königsberg from the north, and the 11th Guards Army from the south, to unite to the west of it, surrounding the German grouping, and

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take the city. After that, by the end of January 30, the port of Pillau should have been captured.

To the south, the 5th Army was to advance on Friedland - Braundenberg, the 28th Army - on Landsberg - Melsack, the 2nd Guards - on Bartenstein, the 31st - on Angersburg. In the north, the 43rd Army was to clear the coast of the Kurishes-Haff Bay from the enemy and capture the city of Kranz at the base of the Kurische-Nerung Spit.

The duration of the operation was determined at 6-8 days with a daily rate of advance of rifle formations of 10-12 kilometers. Moreover, in two tank corps, 40-50 serviceable armored units remained, due to low cloud cover and snowfall, aviation was again inactive, and the enemy was clearly underestimated. But the enthusiasm was great, and the Headquarters demanded the speedy defeat of the Germans in East Prussia. Therefore, "Ivan Danilovich considered the deadlines to be real."

The general offensive, resumed on the morning of January 25, developed extremely slowly. The 11th Guards Army, reinforced by the 2nd Guards Tank Corps, struck with two



rifle corps along the southern bank of the Pregel River and the Velau-Königsberg road. At the last moment, the Tatsinsky Corps was reinforced by the 43rd Guards Heavy Tank Brigade, with a staff of 1666 people, 65 IS-2 vehicles, 3 SU-76 self-propelled guns, 19 armored personnel carriers and 3 armored vehicles. Such brigades (there were only five of them in the Red Army) were formed at the end of the war just to break through heavily fortified defensive lines. A heavy tank regiment, a regiment of heavy self-propelled artillery units and reinforcement artillery were also concentrated here. The 39th Army, with the support of the 1st Red Banner Tank Corps, advanced along the northern coast.

During the day, the formations of General Galitsky broke through the intermediate defensive lines on the Biber and Kufli rivers, advanced up to 15-20 kilometers and ran into the Frisching defensive position, which covered the distant approaches to Königsberg. It cost a lot of blood. Only in the battle for the town of Gross Ottenhagen, the 43rd heavy brigade lost 26 IS tanks: "It turned out that it was not bad

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the trained crews of heavy tanks had absolutely no combat experience. Having found themselves in unusual conditions of street fighting, they were unable to discern the dangers: the possibility of hitting them from the windows of houses with Faustpatrons or anti-tank grenades and from ambushes with flank fire on the sides from assault guns ... After the losses we suffered, we no longer had a decisive advantages neither in people nor in military equipment, with the exception of aviation, which, due to bad weather, could not operate. We had a certain superiority of the artillery."

However, the superiority in artillery was leveled by the lack of ammunition generously spent on firing at areas.

Lyudnikov's divisions by the end of the day captured the city of Tapiau.

On January 26, Chernyakhovsky assigned the 39th and 11th Guards Armies the combat mission of capturing Königsberg. Things moved hard:

"The resistance of the German fascist troops increased sharply that day. The enemy introduced a number of new units from the reserve into battle, and significantly strengthened the grouping of artillery. Its aircraft repeatedly bombed the combat formations of our army. But the main reason for the unsuccessful actions that day was the misunderstanding by some commanders of formations and units of the new conditions of the combat situation. And the army command, hoping to take Königsberg on the move, did not promptly aim them at the possibility of the transition of the Nazi troops to a tough defense on the outskirts of the city. After breaking through the fortified line on the rivers on the Pregel and Alle rivers, army troops successfully broke through field defensive lines and captured strongholds for two days. The battles on September 26 were fought on the near approaches to Königsberg. Under these conditions, it was necessary to organize combat operations of the troops not to break through field fortifications on the move and pursue, but to attack the enemy, who was defending himself on a fortified line prepared in advance with long-term reinforced concrete fortifications. Such an offensive required careful organization of interaction, especially between infantry,

tank

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mi and artillery, on which the main burden of the battle was assigned when breaking through the enemy defenses. It was necessary to bring up heavy artillery, push forward self-propelled guns, as well as guns of divisional and regimental artillery, plan a powerful strike and support by aircraft.

In a number of rifle divisions, the combat formations of the units did not correspond to the situation. Separate infantry and artillery units did not deploy for a long time, got stuck on the roads, stuck in populated areas. Some commanders and headquarters of formations sometimes lost control of subordinate units, did not know their true position ...

The resistance of the enemy turned out to be much stronger than we and the front headquarters expected.

In short, the assault with hostility on the pillboxes failed, Königsberg was not taken.

Nevertheless, by the end of January 26, the resistance of the German troops in positions along the Daime and Alla rivers to Friedland was broken on the entire 3rd Belorussian Front. The 5th Army, having captured Allenburg, continued to advance in the direction of Kreuzburg, the 28th Army fought south of Friedland. The troops of the left wing of the front, pursuing formations of the enemy's 4th army, completely captured the structures of the Letzen fortified area and reached the line west of the Masurian lakes.

In order to strengthen the Königsberg group, Hitler agreed to surrender Memel (Klaipeda). On January 27-28, the 28th Army Corps (58th, 95th Infantry Divisions) of General Hans Gollnik, having blown up port facilities, left for the Zemland Peninsula along the Kurische-Nerung Spit. The picture of the German retreat was observed from the shore by the troops of General Beloborodov:

"In clear weather, from forward observation posts, this spit, stretching from Granz to the sea, was visible quite well. An endless stream of troops filled it. There were infantry, artillery, convoys, carts. The commander of our artillery, General Shcheglov, looking at this stream, only shook his head. Here would be heavy artillery! But the guns of the 37th artillery brigade supported the rifle units attacking Granz, and we could allocate

only one

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well, two batteries. They hit the spit, black sultans of explosions rose among the fascist columns, scattering and dispersing them. But soon the stream closed again and continued to move towards Granz. And from the sea, covering the retreating, German cruisers hit our batteries in response.

On the 27th, and the 28th, and the 29th, and the 30th of January, Lyudnikov and Galitsky received the same task from the front headquarters - to take Königsberg by evening. The corresponding directives were received by the lower chiefs:

"To the commander of the TTK

Commander of the military branches.

1. The enemy, defeated on the fortified line of the river. Daime, hastily retreats to the inner contour of the city of Königsberg.
2. Army 01/27/45. On the move, destroys the opposing enemy, captures Königsberg.
3. The SCC immediately destroys the enemy with fire and wheels and takes possession of Metgetten with swift actions, surrounds Königsberg and destroys enemy groupings ...

Lyudnikov, Siminovsky, Boyko.

Massed infantry attacks, in which some divisions almost completely died, the armies of Lyudnikov and Galitsky, step by step, overcoming from 3 to 10 kilometers a day, approached the outer defensive bypass of the city. By this time, 25-40 people remained in the rifle companies, the artillery had a stock of 0.2 ammunition. The 1st Tank Corps had 32 serviceable tanks and self-propelled guns, which were transferred to the 89th Tank Brigade of Colonel A.I. Sommer; The 117th and 159th brigades did not have tanks. The 5th Army made almost no progress during these days; The 28th, 2nd shock and 31st armies continued to trample on the line of the Alle River.

Chaos reigned in Königsberg during this period, connected with the disorganization of administration, the indiscriminate influx of refugees from the northern regions of East Prussia and the defeated units of the 3rd Panzer Army, the actual absence of a military garrison, except for units

the re-formation of the 1st Infantry Division, which took place here. On January 27, in connection with the threat of a breakthrough by Russian tanks, the party authorities announced 96 evacuations of the civilian population, and tens of thousands of people.

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They rushed out of the city on the road to Pillau in order to have time to board ships heading west: "An unimaginable number of people have accumulated on this road. Who walked, who rode a bicycle or wagon, women carried baby carriages, right there - columns of tank units withdrawn to the Zemland Peninsula - all this moved in three or four rows in the direction of Pillau. Having hastily packed their suitcases, the "Secretary of the Regional Party Committee" Koch and other "prominent leaders" left Königsberg.

On January 28, bypassing the city from the north, the corps of the 39th Army entered the Fuchsberg-Königsberg line; On the 29th they captured the Metgeten railway station to the west of the city, on the 31st they reached the shore of the Frichess-Haff bay, cutting off the garrison from the German troops on the Samland Peninsula. Almost at the same time, the 11th Guards Army on its left flank made its way to the bay south of Königsberg, cutting off the highway leading to Elbing, and seized the center of the stronghold on the outer bypass - Fort No. 9 "Don".

Less official sources, in addition to the "fanatical resistance of the rabid fascists", also name other reasons for the "slow" advance of the Red Army. For example, I.A. Fegelson, veteran of the 447th artillery regiment, who started the war in Brest:

"From my "trench point of view" I can tell you the following. We could probably take this accursed Königsberg already in the autumn of 1944, or at least at the beginning of 1945.

But the troops all the time "stepped on the same rake." Only in my memory our offensive was stalled three times for the following reason. The infantry ran into yet another distillery or wine warehouse, and then it began... Once we, artillerymen, were even sent to pick up drunken infantrymen who were lying in puddles of alcohol at one of these distilleries."

Radio operator of the 13th Artillery Regiment of the 1st Proletarian Rifle Division L.M. Polonsky describes the capture | The 1st Guards Army of the Wigbold station, seven kilometers from the southern outskirts of Königsberg:

"The station was recaptured from the Germans thanks to a bold attack by itself

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walkers. When they captured the station, a huge distillery was discovered there. And then all over the district the war for a couple of days "ended". And what happened there, I sometimes see before my eyes to this day. The whole army rushed to get drunk. People were drowning in wine. Many immediately began to sort things out and shoot at each other. Wine and alcohol were poured into buckets, helmets, canisters, and into barrels of gasoline. Drunken fighters wandered through the cellars of the plant and, not finding a way out or being unable to reach it, fell on the wine-filled floor of the cellar... Having fallen on the floor in hops, they choked in the "wine rivers" and perished. But few paid attention to this. The orgy continued. All around there were screams, obscenities, shooting, snoring, groans, singing, commands of officers - everything was mixed up! There was no one sober on the front lines. The tanks were not at their starting positions for the attack, but around the plant. Tanks without crews. In a word, our offensive stopped. On the third day after the start of the bacchanalia, the army commander arrived at the station. Or was it a member of the Military Council of the 11th Guards. A. Major General of the tank troops, by the name of Kulikov (I don't remember exactly). He looked at what was happening at the distillery and ordered to open the dams and flood the distillery, which was in the lowland. The soldiers were given ten minutes to leave the factory. But many were dead drunk and could not get up and walk. They were flooded along with the plant. And while our troops were "drinking", the Germans were able to pull up reserves in this area and close the breach. Now I am not exaggerating and not exaggerating... What happened, happened... But I do not think that only this story in Wigbold predetermined the partial failure of the February offensive plan,

implying the capture of Koenigsberg. There was a lot of other stuff going on... I just don't want to talk about it now."

This grand drinking bout is still legendary among the locals.

Daiu of the 28th Army, according to M.F. Kosinsky, similar problems arose on the way to Preussisch-Eylau:

"With difficulty, risking our lives every minute, we got out of Schloditten and an hour later reached the village. What's yours

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rilos! He, apparently, was captured by our units so suddenly that the population did not have time to leave him. The presence of a distillery and a population, mainly women, caused a complete drop in discipline among our soldiers.

The streets were crowded with drunken soldiers, arranging a uniform hunt for German women, who had forgotten their sense of duty, who had lost their human appearance. The distillery blazed bright flame.

We returned to Schloditten. There it turned out that the Germans had attacked the settlement we had just been to. They knocked ours out of it with heavy losses. We urgently had to withdraw units from other sectors of the front, create a "fist" and, again at the cost of considerable losses, recapture this small settlement.

In the city of Deutsch-Eylau, a hospital of the 2nd shock army was opened, in which V.E. Khodko:

"They no longer pitched tents, but decided to place those who came to us in the local church building, and they themselves settled in German houses. By that time, the number of wounded gradually less and less...

But a new contingent began to come to us. As a rule, there were two categories. The first is our Russian soldiers poisoned with alcohol. As they entered Germany, they went looking for a drink. Well, this is a Russian man, he cannot do otherwise. The authorities were looking for rags, paintings, and then they were sent by wagons to Russia. And ordinary soldiers were looking for alcohol. In the factories of German distilleries, poisoned alcohol was deliberately left. And our soldiers, of course, drank themselves to death. Those who remained alive were sent to us, we collected them and sent them on. Parties of thirty or forty people also entered. They used to bring them, and they die with us. What they did with the bodies, I don't know. They took them away from us, and either they burned them, or they buried them. Probably, a special morgue was organized.

Excited fighters, relieving stress after military labor, ingested everything that tasted, smelled or tasted like alcohol in packaging. Even the generals, neglecting the fatherland

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They drank vodka "as pure as a mother's tears and strong as Soviet power" from bottles with beautiful labels for furniture cleaning, mistaking it for expensive foreign wine. The hospitals were massively poisoned and drunk to death. The perpetrators of "sabotage" were loudly declared to be the "heinous enemy", who treacherously left wineries and tanks with methyl alcohol on the retreat routes. However, for the time being, the commanders intensified educational work among the troops. Lieutenant I.L. Degen remembered for the rest of his life the lesson taught by the commander of the armored forces of the 3rd Belorussian Front, a man of great pedagogical talent, General A.G. Rodin:

"Rodin went up to the stage and stopped in front of the closed curtain. Then General Rodin delivered the following speech: "All you bastards have received instructions that we now have a new antifreeze, ethylene glycol. All you sons of bitches have been warned that this is a powerful poison. But some assholes think it's just a threat, that the antifreeze is the same - alcohol, glycerin and water that you lapped like pigs, adding water instead of antifreeze and freezing the motors. So here you are, your mother, a visual demonstration. I order, b..., everyone to look at the stage and not turn away, bitches, until I give the command! The curtain flew open. Five people lay on the stage, dying in agony, writhing and breaking and gradually fading away. The crew of the tank, poisoned by drunk antifreeze. I don't know how long the agony of the crew and our agony lasted. But General Rodin and his assistants personally made sure that no one turned away from the stage... This comrade Rodin was a good general..."

And the Soviet doctors were completely unprepared for the rapidly spreading epidemic of venereal diseases:

"The second category that came to us then was patients with venereal diseases. There were many...

Faced with an epidemic, doctors were at first confused. There are few medicines, and even fewer specialists. Tripper was treated in a barbaric way: several cubes of milk were injected into the buttock of the patient, an abscess formed, tempera

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the tour rose above forty degrees. Bacillus, as you know, cannot stand such heat. Then the abscess was treated. Sometimes it helped. It was worse with syphilitics. I was told that they were gathered in the city of Neyrupin in a special camp and for some time they were kept behind barbed wire, waiting for medicines, which were not yet available. Looking ahead, it should be said that our medicine, two or three years later, brilliantly coped with this unexpected and difficult task. By the end of the 1940s, venereal diseases disappeared, crippling, of course, the body and soul of those who went through them, and often their families ... "

Königsberg, of course, was a "fortress". By Hitler's decision on January 27, General Lyash was appointed commandant. The headquarters of the 3rd Panzer Army was evacuated to Pomerania.

The command of the Army Group "North" made efforts to release Königsberg and restore land communications with all groups. Southwest of the city, in the area of Brandenburg, it concentrated the 548th Volksgrenadier Division and the Panzergrenadier Division "Grossdeutschland", which they used on 30 January to attack along the Frisches Haff to the north. The 5th Panzer and 56th Infantry Divisions struck towards them. They succeeded in pushing back units of the 11th Guards Army and breaking through a corridor one and a half kilometers wide, which was shot through by Soviet artillery, towards Königsberg.

On January 31, General Chernyakhovsky came to the conclusion that it would not work to take Königsberg with a swoop:

"It became clear that scattered and insufficiently prepared strikes against Königsberg (mainly in logistical terms) would not lead to success, but, on the contrary, would give the Germans time to improve their defense. First of all, it was necessary to destroy the long-term defensive structures of the fortress (forts, pillboxes, bunkers), to suppress the system of its fire. And this required a sufficient amount of artillery - heavy, large and special power, tanks and self-propelled guns and, of course, not

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little ammo. Careful preparation of troops for the assault was impossible without an operational pause.

Over the next week, the divisions of the 11th Guards Army, "repelling the frenzied attacks of the Nazis", consolidated their positions and themselves daily went on the attack, trying to reach the shore of the bay. K. On February 6, they again cut the highway, firmly blocking Königsberg from the south. True, after that, 20-30 fighters remained in the rifle companies. The troops of the 39th and 43rd armies in a stubborn struggle pushed the enemy divisions deep into the Zemland Peninsula, forming the outer front of the encirclement. Regiments of the 91st Dukhovshchina Guards Rifle Division, Colonel V.I. Kozhanov on February 2, they even managed to break through to the coast of the Baltic Sea in the Germau area, but on February 4, they were cut off by the "Memel" strike from the Kranz side, fought for five days surrounded and, without waiting for help, were forced to fight their way back .

On February 9, the commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front ordered in the Königsberg area to go over to a tough defense and prepare for a thorough assault.

In the center, the 5th and 28th Armies advanced on the Kreuzburg-Preussisch-Eylau front; on the left wing, the 2nd Guards and 31st Armies crossed the Alle, moved forward and captured the strongholds of Legden, Bandels and the large Landsberg road junction. Rokossovsky's armies pressed the Germans from the south and west. The Hejlsberg group, cut off from the land, could now communicate with Germany only along the ice of the bay and further along the Frische-Nerung spit to Danzig. Wooden pilings, reinforcing the "road of life", ensured the movement of vehicles. Columns of refugees stretched towards the bay in an endless line: "We wanted to run, only run. If only not to fall into the hands of the Russians!

The German historian Guido Knopp writes: "On foot, in sledges or horse-drawn carts, driven by fear, the groups tried to get on the rescue ship. But in front of the seemingly safe port there was a bay - a bay in the Baltic Sea 20 km wide and 70 km long, which was separated from the sea by a 50-kilometer sand spit. Already in itself, overcoming the frozen bay was for many

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some people by competition with death. In the dark icy desert, they often lost their way, wandered and died.

Those who nevertheless overcame this test, having left their burning homeland in East Prussia and Pomerania, and reached the port cities of Swinemünde, Danzig and Pillau alive, got a happy chance to get on the ships crowded with refugees, which went to the West every day. ..

The military situation was catastrophic. Everywhere the defense line was broken, the German units were swept away by the stream of superior Russian troops. The soldiers were fighting for their own lives. Nevertheless, they strove to hold the front until the civilian population at least half felt safe...

A trail of horror stretched across the whole of East Prussia: baby carriages with small frozen bodies stood by the side of the road. Ragged-wrapped corpses of children protruded from the snowdrifts. There was rarely time for funerals. Concepts such as mercy and solidarity increasingly faded into the background."

The German Navy organized an unprecedented rescue operation, using everything that could float on the water. By mid-February, 1.3 million out of a total population of 2.5 million had been evacuated from East Prussia.

At the same time, the German fleet provided artillery support to the ground forces in the coastal direction and was intensively engaged in military transportation. As early as January 18, immediately after the fall of Warsaw, Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz reported to Hitler that for the transfer of troops to Pomerania and Prussia, the fleet could provide 28 ships with a total displacement of over 100,000 registered tons. This made it possible to simultaneously take on board 23,000 soldiers and officers, 4,500 horses and 3,160 vehicles. The next day in the Courland "cauldron"

Parts of the 4th Panzer Division began to be loaded on the transport ship Prussia, which arrived in the Danzig Bay on January 21 and became part of the 2nd Army of General Weiss. Sle

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house in Danzig was transported by the 32nd Infantry Division. At the end of January, the loading of units of the 3rd SS Panzer Corps began in Libava; they also reached Stettin quite safely. Next in line was the 389th Infantry Division. Transportation by sea, in comparison with the problems on the railways, was carried out so quickly that Hitler expressed his admiration for the efficiency and speed of the measures taken by Doenitz, calling the admiral "the best a specialist in his field".

This disgrace was simply obliged to stop the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which received the task of active operations of bomber aircraft, submarines and torpedo boats to disrupt the German sea communications from the Gulf of Riga to the Pomeranian Bay, and also to assist in every possible way their ground forces advancing along the sea coast.

But nothing happened.

For operations in the southern part of the maritime theater, it was necessary to have bases. The harbors of Riga, Tallinn and Memel were mined, cluttered with sunken ships and structures of blown up mooring facilities; leaving, the Germans destroyed warehouses, lighthouses, oil storage facilities, communications, and repair plants. Liepaja and Ventspils were in the hands of the enemy until the end of the war. Only in Palanga was it possible to place a formation of torpedo boats transferred here by rail, but the real benefit from their actions, according to Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov, there were few. So, in March, the German "schnellboats" destroyed the TKA-66, TKA-166, TKA-196 in the Libau region and captured the division commander, captain 3rd rank M.G. Chebykin. By the beginning of May, Soviet boat boats had chalked up 3 transports, the destroyer 2-34 (which managed to get to Kiel under its own power) and one minesweeper.

Not a single surface ship larger than a guard was trying to get out of the mouth of the Neva. "It is noteworthy," writes Admiral Friedrich Ruge, "that in the last half of the war, not a single destroyer or larger ship of the Soviets entered the Baltic Sea, where almost always suitable

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objects in the form of low-speed, poorly guarded convoys. The Soviets attacked them only with aircraft, submarines and torpedo boats. When comparing the results achieved with the tactical possibilities, the former seem to be more than modest." Meanwhile, German task forces led by the "pocket battleships" "Admiral Scheer" and "Admiral Lützow" unimpededly rained down tons of shells on the advancing Soviet troops in East Prussia, without losing a single ship.

Naval aviators achieved the greatest success by striking at concentrations of ships in the area of Liepaja (in February), Danzig (at the end of March), Königsberg, Pillau and Kolberg (vaprel), sinking, according to German estimates, about 15 steamers. True, the "admirals" were drowned by British pilots.

Of the 65 submarines that were in the Red Banner Baltic Fleet at the beginning of the war, 11 relatively combat-ready units remained in service, and 5 of them categorically required repair and replacement of worn-out mechanisms. As a result, 4 submarines were deployed to disrupt enemy communications on the approaches to the Courland Peninsula.

The crew of S-13 under the command of Captain 3rd rank A.I. Marinesko. Late in the evening on January 30, he sank the passenger liner "Wilhelm Gustlov" with a displacement of 24.5 thousand tons, which left Gotenhafen. On board the ship, following a constant course at a 12-knot course with navigation lights on, accompanied by

decrepit destroyer Leve, there were approximately 9,000 civilians, 918 cadets of the second submarine training division, 162 wounded soldiers and 173 crew members. Floating to the surface, Marinesko approached the target from the coast and from a distance of 700 meters fired a "fan" volley. Fifteen seconds later, three torpedoes hit the ship, the fourth got stuck in the torpedo tube. An hour later, the Gustlov, the pride of the National Socialist flotilla Strength Through Joy, lay at the bottom of the Baltic. The ships that arrived in time managed to save 904 people, including 528 cadets. S-13, evading the attacks of the guards, went to the open sea. Marina ten days later

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how lucky again. On the night of February 10, he sank the hospital ship "General von Steuben" (which he classified as the light cruiser "Emden") with a displacement of 14.6 thousand tons, on board of which there were 4267 people - wounded soldiers and refugees . 659 passengers survived.

On April 17, the guards submarine L-3 distinguished itself under the command of Captain 3rd Rank V.K. Konovalova, who sank the passenger-and-freight ship Goya of 5,230 tons, along with 7,000 refugees and the wounded.

Thus, the main victims of the three most famous attacks of Soviet submarines were women and children, with a total number of about 20 thousand people. In Soviet "historical research" drowned men from "Gustlov" (among them 390 half-educated cadets) turned into "3700 qualified

, qualified submariners; The fascist submarine fleet lost more than 80 trained crews that it needed so badly." The wounded from the "General Steuben" turned into a kind of tank division, hastening to defend Berlin, and the victims of the "Goya" - selected SS men and submarine officers. Particularly gifted scribes began to call the destruction of the Gustlov "the attack of the century", and Marinesko - "submariner No. 1", who thwarted the plans of "total submarine warfare and the naval blockade of England". Patriotically excited personalities considered it a flagrant injustice that the heroic captain, among other things, who became famous in the submarine brigade as a "systematic drunkard" and an incorrigible womanizer and, as soon as the war ended, was dismissed from the fleet with a reduction in military rank two steps, the "envious" did not qualify for the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. After all, on the other side of the scales are the "attack of the century" and "submariner No. 1", who made six military campaigns and sank four transports with a total displacement of 42,557 tons. world by the destruction of three British armored cruisers within one hour on September 22, 1914. Or to Junter Prien, who on October 13, 1939 penetrated (0-47 in, "It would seem that a securely guarded naval base

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Scapa Flow and three torpedoes that sank the battleship Royal Oak at the anchorage. And in just four months, Prin sank 15 ships with a total tonnage of 89,000 tons. Or, to put it another way: on November 29, 1944, American Captain Joseph Inright on the submarine Archerfish sank the largest aircraft carrier of World War II, Sinano, with a total displacement of 72,000 tons, guarding three destroyers. Submarine (-109) destroyed 29 transports with a total capacity of 150 thousand tons during three combat campaigns. "Grandmaster" Otto Kretschmer sank 44 merchant ships and two destroyers - 266 thousand tons during seventeen months of combat work, and this is more than he managed to - fight the entire Soviet submarine fleet for four years of the war.

These achievements, one must understand, fade against the background of the brilliant "attack of the century".



Of course, there can be no questions to Alexander Ivanovich. He honestly earned his Star of Hero, conferred posthumously in 1990: in a difficult situation he tactically competently attacked and destroyed two armed enemy transports - without requiring ship roles and risking the lives of the entire crew (literally the day before, on January 6, 1945, in the Danzig Bay the S-4 of Captain 3rd rank A. A. Klyushkin died. Before the war, the Baltic Fleet received 13 C-type submarines from industry, only thirteen survived.

In principle, even if all the sides of the German ships were painted with Red Crosses, this should not have mattered to Marinesco. The Bolsheviks, rejecting "bourgeois prejudices", did not recognize international conventions on the laws and customs of war. The first order given to the Baltic submariners by Vice Admiral V.F. Tributs on June 22, 1941, demanded: "Having deployed boats in the middle and northern parts, sink all enemy ships by the right of unlimited submarine warfare." In this regard, Ruge observed: "The specialists in international law have not reached unanimity on the question of whether the emergence of new types of weapons in naval warfare creates a new law. Winners simply act, and they are right."

Other submariners have achieved much lesser results.

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comrade Although there were plenty of targets for attacks, however, according to German information, in four months from the attacks of submarines "7 or 8 steamships and one hospital ship were lost", more than 99% of the ships reached the ports of destination unharmed. According to modern Russian data, in 1945, 17 submarines made 27 combat campaigns, sinking 14-16 transports. Moreover, throughout the entire period, well-guarded military convoys continued to transport German troops without hindrance, but they "did not come across" to Soviet submariners. For example, in the first ten days of February, two dozen transports with divisions of the 3rd SS Panzer Corps and other units were on the way from Courland to Swinemünde. In total, more than 400,000 soldiers and officers and 2.5 million civilians were taken by sea from Libau, Vindava, Danzig, Kolberg and Swinemünde.

In the communications of Admiral V.F. Tributsa Baltic fleet sank enemy ships a dozen a day: "On April 11, 328 aircraft took to the air. They destroyed 13 transports, 6 patrol ships, 1 destroyer and damaged 6 transports. The next day, 400 aircraft took off. 4 transports, a tanker, 2 patrol ships, a high-speed landing barge were launched to the bottom, several transports were damaged...

I note that the results of combat work were visible for a long time in the western part of the Danzig Bay: in shallow water, along the Hel Spit, superstructures of sunken ships and transport ships stuck out of the water everywhere. Only in the area between Königsberg and Rostock there were 370 of them ... "

And stars were falling from the sky - on the chest and on shoulder straps.

However, upon closer examination, the success is somehow not impressive. For example, on May 5, 1945, the command of the Air Force of the Fleet launched an operation to destroy German ships in the Swinemünde roadstead. Target No. 1 was the squadron battleship Schlesien of the 1905 model. In the course of three massive raids, three air regiments carried out 135

'aircraft sorties, spent 4 torpedoes and 180 bombs of various calibers, including 15 pieces of FAB-1000. In the sitting "Aground, blown up and abandoned by the crew of the ship

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It was necessary to achieve three bomb hits, as a result of which the foremast was shot down and another hole was added in the underwater part, which, in general, almost did not change anything in the technical condition of the battleship. In their defense, the torpedo-bomber pilots stated that the Schlesien was actively maneuvering!

Or another "attack of the century." On August 16, 1947, 25 Pe-2 bombers from the 12th Guards Aviation Regiment of the 8th Mine and Torpedo Division attacked the captured aircraft carrier Graf Zeppelin, helplessly drifting by the will of the waves, without a crew, in broad daylight. The target had a length of 240 m and a width of 31 m. To be sure, so that the pilots, God forbid, would not confuse the aircraft carrier with the tugboats that dragged it to the range, a white cross measuring 20 by 20 m was drawn in the center of the takeoff deck, and two guidance aircraft. "Pawns" carried out bombing in three waves, from heights convenient for themselves, in units and individually, without a hint of enemy opposition or imitation of a combat situation. As a result, out of 100 bombs, six hit the target! The crews of the Tu-2 dive bombers were not admitted to the exercise at all, as they "did not have time to master the technique."

The favorite of the command was the "outstanding underwater ace" captain 3rd rank S.I. Travkin: "He was a great master of underwater attacks. Any of his attacks was of tactical interest, replete with many interesting details, from which it is easy to imagine a creative portrait of its author.

Commanding the Shch-303 and K-52 submarines, Travkin made six combat campaigns during the war, carried out 20 attacks, having used up 50 torpedoes. On his account, compiled solely on the basis of his own reports, there were 13 sunken enemy ships and ships. On April 20, 1945, Ivan Vasilyevich was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and the K-52 boat became Red Banner. It is possible to truly appreciate the "creative portrait" of this writer only taking into account the fact that none of his "victories" has been confirmed to this day. Only the attack of the Aldebaran transport is considered reliable, as a result of which the ship received minor damage, three Germans were killed.

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In fact, the Baltic Fleet was never able to stop or seriously disrupt enemy communications. During the entire war, delivery of strategic raw materials to German ports from Scandinavia was practically without interruption, with minimal losses, transportation was carried out on time in the interests of coastal groupings of ground forces. I remember an amazing detail in the memoirs of General Raus: German soldiers and officers went to the Reich on vacation from the Courland "cauldron"!

But Tributs rejoices: "The political maturity of military sailors grew. I remember this figure: in the first three months of 1945 alone, more than 2 thousand Human"

Political maturity is wonderful. However, Comrade Stalin did not like the delivery of German divisions from Courland to Pomerania and the inability of the Soviet naval commanders to interfere with this process. Therefore, he instructed Marshal L.A. Govorov to pulverize Army Group Courland. With that, the marshal arrived at the headquarters of the 2nd Baltic Front:

"The headquarters is very unhappy that you gave the enemy the opportunity to transfer several divisions from Courland to Germany," Leonid Aleksandrovich warned us. "She fears that a new batch of enemy troops will be transferred from here. Therefore, we are ordered to inflict one after another strong blows on the enemy, to split his grouping into parts. to prevent its transfer to Germany.

On February 16, the Kurland operation began, which lasted until the end of the war. It was a continuous assault, during which seven Soviet armies (1st and 4th shock, 6th and 10th guards, 22, 42, 51st - 70 divisions), overcoming several hundred meters in day, these meters were paid for with the blood of two thousand fighters and commanders. According to Marshal I.Kh. Bagramyan, the Headquarters hatched the idea of landing an amphibious assault through the Irben Strait in the rear of the Courland Grouping, but the landing did not take place "because of the unpreparedness of the Baltic Fleet for such operations." As a result, the front lost more than 160 thousand killed and wounded.

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man - 35% of its original composition. The grouping of General Gilpert continued to be "pricked" even when it did not make any sense, until on May 8, 1945, the Germans themselves hung out white flags.

Within four weeks, most of the territory of East Prussia and Northern Poland was cleared of German troops. During the fighting, the enemy lost about 52 thousand soldiers and officers only as prisoners. Soviet troops captured as trophies more than 4,300 guns and mortars, 569 tanks and assault guns.

By the end of the first ten days of February, German troops in East Prussia were cut off from the rest of the Wehrmacht forces and divided into three isolated groups. The first, consisting of four divisions, was pressed to the Baltic Sea on the Zemland Peninsula, the second, more than five divisions, fortress units and a large number of separate units, was surrounded in the Königsberg area and the third, about twenty divisions of the 4th and 3rd th tank armies, was located in the Heilsberg fortified area south and southwest of Königsberg, occupying a bridgehead about 180 kilometers along the front and 50 kilometers in depth.

The Fuhrer did not allow the evacuation of these troops to cover Berlin, who claimed that, relying on fortified areas supplied by sea, the disunited German groupings with a stubborn defense of the occupied lines were fortified, and for a long time, much larger forces of the Red Army, thereby preventing their transfer to the Berlin direction. The Soviet Headquarters, in turn, believed that the release of the armies of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts could be achieved only through the speedy and decisive liquidation of these groupings.

Most German generals refused to understand Hitler's logic.

Marshal Rokossovsky did not see the point in Stalin's demands:

"After the troops of our front reached the sea of Elblong (Elbing) and the Gulf of Frisch Gaf, cutting off the eastern

Prussian grouping of the enemy, repelled all attempts of this

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groupings to break through to the west, it was enough to cover this direction with the 50th and 3rd armies, transferring them to the 3rd Belorussian Front, the 5th Guards. the tank and 48th armies had to be immediately released, leaving them as part of our front to continue operations in the western direction ...

In my opinion, when East Prussia was finally isolated from the west, it would have been possible to postpone the liquidation of the group of German fascist troops surrounded there, and by strengthening the weakened 2nd Belorussian Front, to speed up the denouement in the Berlin direction. The fall of Berlin would have happened much earlier. But it turned out that 10 armies at the decisive moment were used against the East Prussian grouping... The use of such a mass of troops against the enemy... remote from the place where the main events were decided, in the situation that had developed by that time in the Berlin direction was clearly inappropriate ".

Ultimately, Hitler turned out to be right: out of the eighteen Soviet armies involved in the liquidation of the German coastal bridgeheads, only three managed to participate in the "main battles" of the spring of 1945.

By the decision of the Headquarters of February 6, the troops of the 1st and 2nd Baltic Fronts, blocking the Kurland Army Group, were united into the 2nd Baltic Front under the command of

Marshal L.A. Govorova. The tasks of capturing Königsberg and completely clearing the Zemland Peninsula of the enemy were entrusted to the headquarters of the 1st Baltic Front under the command of General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan with a transfer from the 3rd Belorussian 11th Guards, 39th 43rd Army of the 1st Tank Corps. In turn, on February 9, Rokossovsky received a directive to transfer the 50th, 3rd, 48th and 5th Guards Tank Armies to Chernyakhovsky.

On February 9, General of the Army Chernyakhovsky was ordered

but, without giving the Germans and their troops any respite, complete the rout of General Müller's Fourth Army no later than February 20-25. In fact, the fight against the Heijlsberg group continues

'I complained for 48 days. "As a result of bloody, uncompromising and incessant

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battles, - recalls L.N. Rabichev, "both our and German units lost more than half of their personnel, and from extreme, incomparable fatigue, they began to lose their combat effectiveness.

Chernyakhovsky ordered to advance, the generals - commanders of armies, corps and divisions - ordered, the Headquarters went crazy, all regiments, separate brigades, battalions and companies were marking time. And so, in order to force the battle-weary units to move forward, the front headquarters approached the front line at an unprecedentedly close distance, and the army headquarters were located almost next to the corps headquarters, and the division headquarters approached close to the regiments. The generals tried to raise battalions and companies, but nothing came of it, and then the days came when both ours and the German soldiers were seized by an insurmountable depression. Germans kilometers sodium departed and we stopped.

The 3rd Belorussian Front included the 5th, 28th, 31st, 2nd Guards, 50th, 3rd, 48th Combined Arms, 5th Guards Tank, 3rd Air Armies and the 2nd Guards Tank Corps - a total of 60 rifle divisions, 3 tank corps, 4 separate tank brigades.

First of all, the commander decided to destroy the enemy troops defending the ledge in the Preussisch-Eylau area, then to develop the offensive on Heiligenbeil and dismember the Heilsberg grouping into parts. The 5th Guards Tank Army (155 tanks and self-propelled guns) was tasked, in cooperation with the 48th, to advance along the Frisches Huff Bay to Braunsberg, in order to cut off the enemy's escape route to the coast and deprive him of the opportunity to evacuate to the Frische-Nerung Spit. The cover of the main grouping of the front from Brandenburg was provided by the forces of Krylov's 5th Army. Support from the air was assigned to the 1st air army. Together with the aviation of the Baltic Fleet and the 3rd Air Army, it was supposed to destroy the encircled enemy troops, disrupt the supply and evacuation of them by sea.

The general offensive, which began on February 10, despite

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intensive artillery fire support, developed slowly. The 5th Panzer did not budge, because for two days it repulsed the counterattacks of the German formations, which were trying to break through to the south-west. And when the army moved forward, then "literally every meter of territory had to be taken with a fight"; the commander of the 53rd motorized rifle brigade, Colonel D.N. Dolganov, commander of the 32nd Tank Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel S.G. Kolesnikov, the commander of the 25th Tank Brigade, Colonel I.O. Stanislavsky. Only on February 17 did units of the 29th Panzer Corps reach the Passarga River and capture a small plandarme. The greatest success was achieved by the 28th Army of General Luchinsky, into which the 1st Tank Corps was transferred with all the remaining armored vehicles (38 tanks in the 89th brigade and 18 self-propelled guns in two self-propelled artillery regiments). With the help of the right-flank units of the 2nd Guards Army, the army captured a large stronghold and an important road junction, the city of Preussisch-Eylau, by a roundabout maneuver from the north and south, with the assistance of the right-flank units of the 2nd Guards Army.

In turn, the enemy, by regrouping forces and means, condensed battle formations and created reserves of infantry, tanks and artillery. A developed system of long-term and field structures allowed him, by secretly making a maneuver, to close the gaps in the defense. The average daily rate of advance of the Soviet troops did not exceed 1.5-2 kilometers. Having overcome one defensive line, they ran into the next and were forced to re-prepare and carry out a breakthrough. The enemy put up especially stubborn resistance in the area of the town of Mölsack, a major road junction on the way to Heiligenbeil, where the 3rd Army was advancing. Fierce fighting continued here for three days. On February 17, Mölsack was taken. In extremely unfavorable conditions, which ruled out the use of aviation, Gorbатов's divisions fought off one

, Opponent's counterattack after another.

The next day, on the way to the command post of the 3rd Army, General of the Army I.D. was killed by a shell fragment. Chernyaev, Khovskiy. The Prime Minister of Great Britain expressed his personal condolences to Stalin on the death of the "brilliant

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and talented officer. On February 21, Marshal A.M. took command of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front. Vasilevsky, who left the post of Chief of the General Staff for the sake of military leadership. At the very first meeting with the new commander, Army Commander-3 reported that "... the enemy's stubbornness is increasing, that due to non-flying weather our information about him is very limited. Our divisions, to put it mildly, are incomplete: they have an average of 3300 eaters, but no more than 300 combat personnel. The food is good, food is taken on the spot. But the supply of ammunition is difficult due to the remoteness of front-line warehouses, and it is impossible to satisfy needs with one captured weapon. The offensive was stopped, the 5th tank army was withdrawn from the battle, there were 76 tanks left in it. In twelve days, the total advance of the Soviet troops amounted to 10 to 30 kilometers. The enemy continued to hold the coastal strip measuring 50 by 15-25 kilometers.

While the 3rd Belorussian Front fought with the Heilsberg grouping, the troops of the 1st Baltic Front of the new composition (43rd, 39th, 11th Guards, 3rd Air Army, 1st Tank Corps) fought tense battles on the Zemland Peninsula and the approaches to Königsberg. General Baghramyan planned first to clear the peninsula of the enemy, leaving the necessary number of troops in the Königsberg area for a solid blockade. The essence of his decision was to attack the adjacent flanks of the 43rd and 39th armies on Fischhausen to reach the western coast of the peninsula, cut the enemy grouping in two and destroy

parts.

"To me personally," agrees General Galitsky, "such a division of the tasks of the front seemed natural and correct. The preliminary defeat of the Zemland group was undoubtedly an easier task than the assault on Königsberg. The complete isolation of the latter from the central part of fascist Germany, undoubtedly, should have affected the morale of its garrison and facilitated the capture of the fortress. In addition, the consistent solution of the tasks of the front gave time to the armies intended for the assault on Königsberg to carefully prepare their army operations.

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tions. The significant forces and military equipment released after the defeat of the Zemland grouping could also be used to strengthen these armies.

The headquarters approved this plan on February 17, and the operation was scheduled to begin on the 20th.

However, a day earlier, the Germans themselves suddenly launched two counter attacks: from the west, from the Fischhausen area, on Königsberg with the forces of the 58th and 95th Infantry Divisions and from the east, from the city, the 5th Panzer, 1st Infantry and 561st people's grenadier divisions. As a result of three days of fighting, they managed to push back the troops of the 39th Army, capture the key position of Metgeten and break through

along the southern coast of the Zemland Peninsula, a corridor 7–9 kilometers wide with highway No. 131 and an operating railway. Ludnikov's army suffered significant losses. Such an incident, Bagramyan explains, happened "because of the clear superiority of the enemy in infantry and artillery, and especially in tanks." The Germans established other reasons: "In this area there were formations of the 39th Army under the command of Lieutenant General Lyudnikov. Captured documents obtained during the offensive stated that during the check of combat readiness, gross violations were revealed. The discipline in the troops is weak, the sergeants are engaged in drunkenness and looting, vehicles are loaded with trophy rags. According to the order of February 10, the civilians were to be immediately withdrawn to the rear, 20 kilometers from the combat zone. The Russian command, therefore, had its own problems and concerns.

So they didn't wait.

Lyudnikov was again handed over to the 1st tank corps, more precisely, its remnants, from which a consolidated detachment was formed under the command of Major General G.N. Filippov: 89th tank brigade (21 tanks), 44th motorized rifle brigade (583 active bayonets), 1514th self-propelled artillery regiment (19 SU-76 self-propelled guns); from reinforcement artillery there were 15 mortars of 120 mm caliber, 9 three-inchers and 7 Katyushas. The detachment, having made a march around Königsberg, entered the battle together with units of the 113th Rifle Corps, then tankers in

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as a "fire engine" they were transferred from division to division, but it was not possible to restore the situation. On the evening of February 23, the consolidated detachment was surrounded and defeated by the Germans in Medenau. Without waiting for help, having lost all combat vehicles and two-thirds of the personnel, tankers and motorized riflemen were forced to break back at night.

In order to coordinate the efforts of all troops operating in East Prussia and ensure a unified leadership, the Stavka on February 25 abolished the 1st Baltic Front. On its basis, the Zemland Group of Forces was created, which became part of the 3rd Belorussian Front. Bagramyan became Vasilevsky's deputy.

From the end of February to mid-March, the staffs and troops of the front were preparing for a new offensive. Marshal Vasilevsky decided to postpone the Zemland operation until better times and act consistently. The first step was to put an end to the enemy grouping pressed against the Frisches Haff Bay. To this end, it was envisaged that a double concentric strike from the east and southeast in the direction of Heiligenbeil would dismember the Heilsberg grouping into parts, isolate them, and then destroy them separately. The implementation of this plan was entrusted to the 1st Guards, 5th, 28th, 2nd Guards, 31st, and 48th Armies. The band of the 5th Guards Tank Army was transferred last, which with 1 March was redeployed to the Danzig direction. Front-line reinforcements were distributed mainly between the 5th, 28th and 3rd armies, which were preparing an offensive in the direction of the main attack. Of the available 582 combat-ready tanks and self-propelled artillery units, 513 units were concentrated in the offensive zones of these armies. The aviation of the Baltic Fleet was supposed to disrupt enemy sea transportation. In total, it was planned to involve 124 bombers, 830 fighters and 470 attack aircraft in the operation.

The headquarters approved the decision of the front commander, demanding at the same time to complete the liquidation of the 4th army no later than March 22, and six days later to begin the destruction of the Königsberg grouping.

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The offensive in the area southwest of Königsberg resumed on March 13 after a 40-minute artillery preparation. Impenetrable mud greatly hampered the combat operations of formations and the movement of equipment off the roads. But, despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the troops of the front broke through his defenses in the main directions and persistently moved forward. Fog and

constant rains hindered the use of aviation. Only on March 18, when the weather cleared up a little, the 1st and 3rd air armies were able to actively support the attackers.

In six days, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front advanced 15-20 kilometers, reducing the enemy bridgehead to 30 kilometers along the front and from 7 to 10 kilometers in depth. 36th Guards Corps of General P.K. Koshevoy went to the coast of Frisches-Haff Bay and captured Brandenburg.

On March 25, the troops of the 3rd and 31st armies took Heiligenbeil. The Germans were pressed to the sea in a small area 13 kilometers wide and 2 to 5 kilometers deep on the Balga Peninsula. The remnants of the 4th Army were finally liquidated on 29 March. The defeated divisions - about 70 thousand people, of which almost 53 thousand were wounded, abandoned equipment, equipment and heavy weapons, crossed over to the Frishes-Nerung spit on small boats, pontoons and makeshift rafts, from there they were transferred shens to reinforce the Zemland task force. Among the survivors was Captain Richard von Weizsäcker, the future President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The command of the Army Group "North" was evacuated and disbanded in early April as unnecessary. The headquarters of the 4th Army with General Müller moved to Pillau and on April 2 took command of the troops of the Zemland Front and Königsberg.

From February 10 to March 29, Soviet troops destroyed 220 thousand and captured about 60 thousand soldiers and officers, captured 650 tanks and assault guns, up to 5600 guns and mortars, more than 37 thousand vehicles, 128 aircraft. The entire southern coast of Frisches Huff Bay, littered for many kilometers with military equipment, boxes and bags of

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food, thousands of corpses of people and horses, was controlled by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

The Red Army, storming East Prussia, lost an average of 9.8 thousand soldiers and officers daily. The total losses of Soviet troops at the end of March amounted to 386 thousand killed and wounded.

The assault continued...

## WESTERN CARPATHIA OPERATION

In accordance with the general strategic plan, the coordinated actions of the troops of the 1st, 4th and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts were to lead to the complete liberation of Czechoslovakia.

Troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General of the Army I.E. Petrov, who had made his way through the Eastern Carpathians with considerable losses, now had to defeat the opposing enemy, overcome the Western Carpathians and reach the valley of the Vistula and Odra rivers to Moravska Ostrava.

In fact, General Petrov unsuccessfully tried to solve this problem since the autumn of 1944. So, on November 14, the Stavka, dissatisfied with the "sluggish actions" of the troops, even accused the commander of striving "to take into account only the interests of his front, not caring about the position of the neighbor and common interests", and demanded to intensify the offensive, throwing all reserves into battle. . At the same time, S.K. Timoshenko, who coordinated the actions of the fronts in the South-Western theater of operations, was instructed to "immediately go to Petrov and force him to complete the task set by the Stavka directive." However, it didn't help much. The entire front consisted of two combined-arms armies, and sending an entire marshal to help Petrov, the Stavka by another directive withdrew two rifle corps from Petrov - a quarter of the troops, which, of course, was an unequal replacement. Nevertheless, "breaking through the thickness of the Carpathians", the armies of the 4th

The Ukrainian Front crossed the Laborets River, occupied the cities of Humenne and Michalovce on November 26 and were awarded the Moscow salute of the third category.

On November 29, the 38th

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army of Colonel General K.S. Moskalenko (future Marshal and Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR) and the 1st Czechoslovak Rifle Corps of General L. Svoboda (future Minister of Defense and President of Czechoslovakia). The next day, the Headquarters assigned Petrov and Timoshenko the task of capturing the Zborov, Bardeva, Preshev, Koshytsya line no later than December 12-15, and capturing Krakow by the beginning of January with the right wing.

The conditions for the actions of the Soviet troops were extremely unfavorable. The Western Carpathians, consisting of mountain ranges - the Slansky and Slovak Ore Mountains, the High and Low Tatras, the Big and Small Fatra, stretching from north to south, blocked the way to Moravia and the Czech Republic from the east. Many mountain rivers and streams with steep banks and unstable water regime flowed through the valleys and gorges. The roads Presov-Zilina-Olomouc and Kosice-Banska-Bystrica-Trencin meander through deep gorges from east to west. The rest are inaccessible. In general, there was a mountain war with all its features, which were even more aggravated with the advent of winter. The mountains fettered the maneuver, forcing the troops to act disunitedly, in separate directions, often without roads. The mountains made it difficult to use artillery and aviation. The mountainous and wooded nature of the terrain, which allowed the enemy to carefully camouflage himself, made it impossible to fully open his defense system and the location of fire weapons.

The German command had significant forces. At a depth of up to 300-350 kilometers, a number of defensive lines were equipped in advance, which, if necessary, could be occupied by both reserves advanced from the depths and retreating troops. Cities and large settlements, road junctions, dominant heights were prepared for all-round defense. Tank-dangerous directions were densely mined, covered by gorges, scarps and anti-tank ditches.

The December offensive stalled as soon as it began.

On December 26, the Military Council of the front, with the consent of Timoshenko, reported to Moscow: "Our troops are exhausted after eighteen days of intense forest fighting. At this time

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there is an urgent need to pour in reinforcements to the units, to equip them with the material part of the weapons, horse composition.

By the beginning of 1945, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front (38th, 1st Guards, 18th combined arms, 8th air armies, 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps - 25 divisions, | fortified area, 2 infantry and 4 separate tank brigades - a total of 267 thousand people) occupied the line of Jaslo, the eastern bank of the Ondava River, Turna and were preparing for a new operation with the former tasks.

The 38th Army, interacting with the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front, according to the plan, delivered the main blow around the Carpathians from the north, in the general direction of Nowy Sycz, Bielsko-Biala and Krakow. To build on the success of its lane, it was planned to use a mobile group.

1st Guards Army Colonel General A.A. Grechko (another future marshal and minister of defense of the USSR), having broken through the enemy defenses, was to advance to Lyubotin, Stara Lubovnya. The army was attached to the 1st Czechoslovak Corps, which, in fact, was a division: it included two infantry and one tank brigades, the total number was 11.5 thousand soldiers and officers.



18th Army of Lieutenant General A.I. Gastilovicha (after the war he did not make a special career, but the future marshal and Supreme Commander of the USSR Armed Forces L.I. Brezhnev served as the head of the political department) received the task of advancing from the area south of Mokranze in the direction of Smolnik, capturing the city of Spisska Nova -Weight, and part of the forces to bypass Kosice from the west. In the future, move to Poprad, Ružomberok, Zilina.

A feature of the forthcoming actions of the 4th Ukrainian Front was that its main forces advancing in the Krakow direction were to interact with the troops of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and the divisions operating in the Koshytsky direction, with the 2nd Ukrainian front. This created additional difficulties for Petrov's headquarters in organizing command and control. According to Moskalenko, "the front, acting in the zone between

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the Duberlin and Vienna directions, at that time did not have a pronounced independent operational direction. The Carpathians, which were in front of the front, in winter conditions, represented an insurmountable obstacle, and therefore the Stavka instructed him to ensure the actions of the 2nd, then the 1st Ukrainian fronts, now to the north, then to the south of the Carpathians.

2nd Ukrainian Front Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky (40th, 27th, 53rd, 7th guards, 6th guards tank, 5th air armies, 23rd tank, 4th and 6th guards cavalry corps, 4th and 1st Romanian armies - 47 rifle and 8 cavalry divisions, 2 fortified areas, 2 tank, 2 mechanized, 2 cavalry corps, 1 a separate tank and 1 self-propelled artillery brigade - 385 thousand people) had the task of reaching the borders of the rivers with the main forces Gron and Nitra, then advance on Bratislava, Vienna and Brno.

40th Army Lieutenant General F.F. Zhmachenko and the 4th Romanian Army of General N. Descalescu were to break through the enemy defenses southeast of Pleshivets and Rozhnyava and, developing the offensive in the general direction of Dobshina, help the 18th Army in defeating the Kosice group. From the Luchinets region in the direction of Galich, Banska Bystrica, the 27th army of Colonel General S.G. was ordered to advance. Trofimenko and the 1st Romanian Army, General V. Atanasiu. The attack on Zvolen was carried out by the 53rd Army of Lieutenant General I.M. Managarov, and on Banska Shttyavnitza - the 1st mechanized cavalry group of Lieutenant General I.A. Pliev. Thus, the troops of Malinovsky had to storm the Carpathians from the south. The left-flank 7th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies received the task of striking from the area north of Esztergom along the left bank of the Danube to Komarno.

Taking into account the Romanian and Czechoslovak units in the 4th 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, there were 652 thousand soldiers and officers, 9910 guns and mortars, 453 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, 1283 combat aircraft.

The enemy had here part of the forces of the 17th field army, ar

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Meisky group "Heinrici", which were part of the army group "A", the 8th army and part of the forces of the 6th army of the group "South". These troops numbered 550,000 men, up to 5,000 guns and mortars, 330 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 680 aircraft.

The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front went on the offensive on January 6 from the line of the Hron River. 7th Guards Army (25th, 27th Guards, 30th Rifle Corps, 27th Guards Tank Brigade) Colonel General M.S. Shumilov and the 6th Guards Tank Army (5th Guards Tank, 4th and 9th Guards Mechanized Corps) of Colonel General A.G. Kravchenko broke through the defenses and two days later approached Komarno, creating a bridgehead north of the Danube.

On January 12, the offensive was resumed by the troops of the 40th, 27th and 53rd armies, as well as the Romanian 4th and 1st armies. By the end of the fourth day, they managed to wedge into the enemy's location to a depth of 18 kilometers and expand the breakthrough area to 40 kilometers. The higher the Soviet troops

climbed the mountains, the harder it became for the attackers. Deep snow, ice, frequent snowstorms and well-fortified enemy resistance centers on roads, in gorges and on passes created enormous difficulties. Rifle units were often left without artillery and air support. K. On January 25, the armies of Zhmachenko and Trofimenko captured the cities of Rozhnyava, Yelshava, Luchinets and fought on the outskirts of Dobshin. In the Zvolen direction, the 53rd Army (24th Guards, 49th, 57th Rifle Corps) and the cavalry mechanized group had almost no progress. The enemy, fearing that the Soviet troops would enter the deep rear of the entire grouping operating in the area of the Slovak Ore Mountains, stubbornly defended.

General Kravchenko has 43 tanks left in service. On January 23-24, the front commander withdrew the KMG to the reserve, and on January 27, the 6th Guards Tank Army.

At the end of January, the 40th Army crossed the main ridge of the Slovak Ore Mountains and part of the forces, together with the partisans operating in this area, liberated the city of Brezno. K | February troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian

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front reached the line west of Brezno, Krivan, Nemtse. To the south, on the bridgehead behind Gron, the 7th guards entrenched

sky army.

The offensive of the 4th Ukrainian Front was carried out according to a "cunning" schedule, which was intended to disperse the attention of the German command and divert enemy forces from the main direction.

The troops of the 18th Army (3rd Mountain Rifle Corps, 17th Guards Corps, 95th Rifle Corps, 159th Fortified Area) were the first to go over to cavative actions simultaneously with their neighbor on the left. The average number of divisions in Gastilovich's army was 3.5-4.5 thousand people. On the 6-kilometer breakthrough section, we managed to collect 630 artillery and mortar barrels, mainly of 76 and 82 mm caliber, which is understandable - you cannot drag six-inch howitzers into the mountains. Another thing is that the stocks of shells were also limited, so for artillery preparation and the first day of the battle, 0.7 artillery ammunition and 3 volleys of rocket shells were allocated.

At 10 o'clock on January 12, after a 40-minute artillery preparation, the infantry of the 7th Guards and 95th Rifle Corps went on the attack. Five rifle divisions were to break through the defenses of the Hungarian 2nd Reserve and 16th Infantry Divisions from the 5th Army Corps. Due to the difficult terrain and "desperate resistance", the Soviet troops advanced extremely slowly, repelling frequent enemy counterattacks. Thus, the settlement of Mokrantse changed hands three times. On the second day of the operation, the German command moved the 1st Ski Division from the reserve and transferred the battle group of the 4th Mountain Division from the 40th Army zone. The Hungarian units were withdrawn to the rear, but the 253rd Infantry Division appeared on the front line. Fierce fighting on the distant approaches to Kosice continued without significant success until 17 January.

The shock group of the front - the 38th army (101st, 67th, 52nd rifle corps) from the area south of Jaslo went on the offensive in the direction of Krakow on the morning of January 15th. In the planned breakthrough zone, 1443 guns were concentrated and

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120-mm mortars, 134 tanks and self-propelled guns, a density of 207 was achieved, in some places 250 barrels per kilometer of the front. The artillery preparation lasted 105 minutes and was effective, among other things, because for the first time geodetic and topographic preparation of firing was carried out in advance - in previous operations there was somehow "not enough time" for this!

On the very first day, the divisions of the first echelon, supported by the entire aviation of the 8th Air Army, broke through the defenses of the 78th and 320th People's Grenadier Divisions, crossed the Wisloka River on the move and captured the rear line on the western bank, which the enemy failed to take. After overcoming the water barrier, a mobile group consisting of the 31st and 42nd Guards Tank Brigades, four rifle battalions and two artillery regiments led by Deputy Commander Lieutenant General N.I. Kiryukhin. By 21 o'clock the group took control of the Vuytov road junction, throwing forward detachments to Gorlitsa.

The enemy defense was broken through 16 kilometers along the front and up to 18 kilometers in depth. To get rid of the slightest threat to his right flank, Moskalenko ordered the commander of the 10] 1st Rifle Corps, Lieutenant General A.L. With part of the forces, Bondarev should be "turned" to the right, into the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and capture the city of Jaslo. Which was duly executed by the morning.

On January 16, in connection with the successfully developing offensive of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which created a threat of encirclement of the 17th Army, the German command began to withdraw its troops to the west. In the next three days, the 38th Army, knocking down the enemy's rearguards, conducted a continuous pursuit and on January 20 captured the city of Nowy Sanch. Nevertheless, the right wing of the 4th Ukrainian Front was hopelessly lagging behind its neighbors, which is why the Headquarters entrusted the liberation of Krakow to Marshal Konev.

General Moskalenko believed that the strikes of the two fronts should have been synchronized in time from the very beginning:

"No matter how swift our offensive was, we still could not make up for the time that we had lost by starting the operation only on January 15th. As a result, as I expect

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gave, we have only gone about halfway to Krakow, and the troops of the left flank of the 59th and the right flank of the 60th armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, advancing since January 12, have already started fighting for this city. But it was by no means a matter of which of our armies would get the honor of liberating Krakow. It's about something else.

The enemy troops, which continued to defend in front of the left flank of the 60th Army and outflanked on both flanks by the offensive of the latter, as well as our army, began to retreat to the west under the threat of encirclement. It was impossible to close the ring around them precisely because the offensive of the 60th and 38th armies did not begin simultaneously, with a gap of three days, as a result of which the depth of penetration into the enemy defenses turned out to be unequal.

The enemy grouping was able to leave the "bag", and it retreated into the zone of our army ...

To a large extent, our advance was slowed down, especially on the left flank, by the fact that the 1st Guards Army, on the orders of the front commander, launched an offensive even three days later than us. In general, I still do not see a clear sense in determining the timing of the strike by the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

Indeed, the 11th Guards Army (11th, 107th Rifle, 1st Czechoslovak Corps) joined the general offensive on January 18, after the enemy had begun to withdraw from the line of the Ondava River. In two days, the army advanced 30-40 kilometers and on January 19 liberated the cities of Bardejov and Preshev. At the same time, the commander of the 18th Army to the south of Kosice brought into action his reserve (237th Rifle Division, 5th Guards Tank Brigade, 108th Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment), and to the north he ordered the troops of the 3rd Mountain Rifle Division to advance. corps and the 159th fortified area. On January 19, Kosice - an industrial center, a major communications hub and a strong stronghold - was cleared of the enemy.

Using the advance of the 38th Army, General Petrov regrouped a number of formations of the front from the left wing to the right. In favor of General Moskalenko, who received

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With the task of advancing on Bielsko-Biala, the 95th Rifle Corps, the 5th Guards Tank Brigade, two anti-tank and two self-propelled artillery regiments were withdrawn from the 18th Army. The 15th Assault Engineer Brigade arrived from the front reserve. The 3rd Mountain Rifle Corps was transferred to General Grechko, and the zone of operations of the 1st Guards Army was shifted to the southern regions of Poland - to Nowy Targ, Zywiec. General Gastilovich, who remained with three rifle divisions and a fortified area, on January 22 received the 1st Czechoslovak corps without a tank brigade, which was supposed to "directly liberate his country from the Nazi occupiers", as well as an order to continue moving through the mountain ranges on Poprad and Ružomberok.

Until the end of January, writes Mosklenko, the offensive developed successfully: "Since we preempted the enemy in occupying his defensive lines, the main form of our combat operations, naturally, was the pursuit of retreating enemy troops. The offensive resulted in a kind of competition with the enemy: who will quickly reach this or that line in the depths of the defense. And the pursuers outstripped the retreating.

As a result, the enemy troops failed to organize defense on all six lines. The fascist command, trying to cling to at least one of them, now no longer used its usual methods of withdrawing troops from the previous line: a sharp intensification of operations, increased fire, counterattacks, leaving strong rearguards, which was for us, as it were, a signal of an impending withdrawal enemy. In the January operation, the enemy tried to retreat quietly, imperceptibly, with the usual mode of fire. And even refused the constant demolition work on the eve of withdrawal in order to destroy bridges and other objects. This time they were blown up at the very last moment.

It goes without saying that tank and artillery ambushes were intensively organized, roads were mined and destroyed. And all this was done in order to gain time for organizing defense at the next lines.

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Nevertheless, enemy resistance steadily increased. German divisions first appeared in the zone of the 38th Army, thrown back from Tarnow and Krakow to the south by the offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front, then the formations "released" by Konev from Silesia. The firepower of the strike force of the front, due to the distance from the supply bases, the lagging behind of artillery and divisions of armored trains, has significantly decreased. From January 26 to 29, the troops of the 38th Army fought 35-40 kilometers (more than 200 in total) and ran into a powerful defensive line occupied by German troops, which ran along the western bank of the Byala River: "It was not equipped with just like the previous ones. Here, up to 25 reinforced concrete two-hole machine-gun caps were installed on each linear kilometer of defense. Behind the trenches was an anti-tank ditch. The length of the defensive line along the front reached 25 kilometers. The cities of Dziedzice and Bielsko-Biala, located on the flanks of the enemy, as well as the city of Chekhovice, located in the center of the line, were turned by the Nazis into large strongholds surrounded by fortifications. Given that, moreover, the terrain was difficult to pass, one should have expected excessive losses during repeated attempts to break through the enemy's defenses on the move." In order to pull up and concentrate forces for a new breakthrough, Moskalenko asked the front command for two days of respite.

To the south, troops of the 1st Guards Army entered Nowy Targ on January 29.

The 18th Army, having crossed the main body of the Slovak Ore Mountains, crossed the Gornad River and occupied Spisska Nova Ves on January 27, and Poprad on January 28.

The Slovaks greeted the Red Army enthusiastically. With flowers, of course, it was a bit difficult, but in the Carpathians, it seemed that wine was pumped straight from the ground. The German settlements were deserted, their inhabitants, leaving their cattle and property, fled to the West.

On January 31, the front commander clarified the tasks for the troops: Moskalenko's army was supposed to capture the city of Bielsko-Biala and develop a strike in the direction of Moravska-Ost

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equals; Grechko's army advanced on Zywiec and further in the direction of Cieszyn; Gastilovich's army along the valley of the Vah River, flowing between the icy ridges of the Low and High Tatras, the main forces still made their way to Ruzomberok, Zhilina. On the left, the 40th and 4th Romanian armies of the 2nd Ukrainian Front continued their offensive in the general direction towards Trencin.

The infantry of the 38th Army again went on the attack on February 1 after a 45-minute artillery preparation. Only on February 3, the enemy defenses on the Byala River were broken through and the Chekhovice stronghold in the center of the position was captured. On February 7, the bridgehead on the western coast was expanded to 20 kilometers along the front and 8 kilometers in depth; on February 8, the Germans were driven out of Dziedice. The mobile group of the army bypassed Bielsko-Biala from the west, cutting off the communications of the garrison, but was itself cut off by enemy counterattacks in the area of Yasenitsa. The 211th Rifle Division, the regiment of the 340th Division, the 42nd Guards Tank Brigade and the 1666th Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment fought for four days. The fierceness of the battles grew: "The enemy was concentrating ever larger forces against the bridgehead, and the number of counterattacks increased. On February 3 there were 11, on February 4 - 12, on February 5 - 16 ... Counterattacks became almost continuous. C | by February 12 there were over 200, including February 8 - 43, the next day - 46 ...

In settlements, there were battles for almost every house.

In front of the army, in addition to the 359th Infantry, 78th, 544th, 545th People's Grenadier Divisions, units of the 20th Panzer Division and the 18th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Horst Wessel" appeared. General Moskalenko received the 95th Rifle Corps from the front reserve and on February 12 took Bielsko-Biala. The mobile group was released with the help of formations of the 1st Guards Army pulled up from the east. At the same time, the right-flank 101st Rifle Corps broke through the Zabrzeg to the Vistula, crossed it, captured the large settlement of Strumen and established an elbow connection with the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

Two rifle corps of the 18th Army, fighting with the 320th People's Grenadier Division and the battle group of the 3rd Mountain

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infantry division in the Ruzomberok direction, in twelve days of February moved westward from 4 to 10 kilometers, freeing Vazhets and Liptovsky-Gradok. However, to the east of the town of Liptovsky Sveti Mikulas, positions in depth, covered with snow, were suddenly discovered, blocking the narrow Vaga valley and occupied by units of the 320th German division. They could only be attacked head-on. "Brothers in arms", not expecting much resistance, did just that. And they were unpleasantly surprised. General Liberty writes:

"At the beginning of February 1945, we ran into such stubborn resistance from the enemy, which the corps did not meet from the Ondava River itself. Before us were no longer weak forces that covered the withdrawal of their troops, but full-blooded units of the Wehrmacht, defending themselves on well-prepared lines on the outskirts of Liptovsky Mikulas. The enemy's defense relied here on mountain ranges, the system of artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire was built taking into account the nature of the terrain and was combined with a system of barriers. Enemy observation posts were located at command heights, from where the positions of our corps units were clearly visible.

On February 3, we made the first attempt to capture Liptovsky Mikulas, but were not successful. On February 5, the attempt was repeated - and again unsuccessfully; February 12 - the same; On February 13, after a long artillery preparation, during which [1,333 shells and mines] were fired at the enemy, parts of the corps again launched an offensive, but to no avail...

each of our attacks, the enemy responded with frenzied counterattacks and massive artillery and mortar fire.

St. Mikulas this time was on the German side, which conscientiously fulfilled its "lesson". No wonder this grandfather is friends with both the angel and the devil. The chief of artillery of the Czechoslovak corps, Alfred Ressel, also remembered those days well:

"On February 13, the battalions moved to their original positions at three in the morning. The mood was subdued. SHL in full

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darkness, deep snow. At about nine o'clock in the morning, after a powerful artillery preparation, the Czechoslovak and Soviet units again went on the attack. And this time, as soon as the infantry rose from the ground and went forward. the enemy opened massive artillery and mortar fire on it, accompanied by infantry fire. The flanking fire of fascist heavy machine guns and a large number of snipers located on the dominant southern slopes of the Liptov Mountains was especially destructive. Advantageous enemy NPs with a long-range view of the entire battlefield in the Vaga valley were also located there. Not surprisingly, the infantrymen did not manage to advance more than 600 meters from the starting line.

During the attack in the afternoon, the infantry again failed to take advantage of the strong support of the artillery. The battalions almost rooted to the spot. They lay down on a bare plain, where it was impossible to hide, and the frozen ground did not allow them to dig in. Enemy artillery tirelessly hit the helpless foot soldiers, in some places panic-stricken people tried to flee. Neither the brigade commander's orders nor the corps commander's liaison officers sent forward were able to move the infantry. Fierce enemy fire and a sense of fear chained the foot soldiers to the ground. The Soviet 17th Guards Corps, operating on the southern flank of the front, also failed to succeed. We had 600 killed and wounded in that battle. After assessing the situation, General Svoboda ordered the infantry to be withdrawn back to its original position...

Four attempts to break through the enemy defenses ended in failure. The corps was still treading water where it had stopped two weeks ago. Losses grew. Heavy fighting, deprivation, unsuccessful attempts to break through the defenses threatened to break the morale of the fighters, especially inexperienced recruits, who numbered up to 50 percent in brigades. Some of the soldiers could not stand the nerves, and they were looking for deliverance in death. All this worried command.

There were many reasons for failure. First of all, poor knowledge of the enemy, who had excellently chosen defensive lines, built in a forced manner.

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row by the local population. On both flanks there were excellent observation posts, where observers fanatically devoted to Hitler and fascism settled. The enemy was well disguised, movement in his camp was strictly reduced to a minimum. Our NPs did not allow good observation of the enemy. We also had many other shortcomings. Attack from the move of such positions could not lead to success. Nothing was given and repeated attacks. If good reconnaissance had been carried out, it would have shown that one should not spare time for the comprehensive preparation of the offensive.

Above Zhiar, above Smrechany, in the vicinity of Vitalishovtse, an oppressive atmosphere of death reigned.

With the permission of the front commander, General Gastilovich on February 13 stopped fruitless attacks. During a respite, as part of the Czechoslovak Corps, due to the mobilization of the local population and soldiers of the former Slovak army, the 4th Infantry Brigade was formed and advanced to the front line. However, they could not really find out anything about the enemy and his defense:

"The corps could not possibly take a prisoner, even an insignificant one, if only he would bring some benefit. Every night, patrols were sent out at various sectors of the front, ambushes were set up and sorties were made, but everything turned out to be useless: the Nazis were not taken prisoner. The brave Duklin and other scouts died in vain under enemy fire, when they marched night after night to the enemy's trenches: they could not take the "tongue". In total, from February 19 to 28, 37 reconnaissance sorties were carried out for this purpose, and only one, the last one, was crowned with success. Almost 100 attempts to take a prisoner were made in February. We lost our people, but there were no results... Despite the selfless efforts of the scouts, the results of combat reconnaissance remained unsatisfactory. Poor knowledge of the enemy's defensive system and his battle order turned out to be the weak point of the corps, especially when choosing targets to suppress the fascist defense.

Starting from March 3, the Czechoslovak units and the 24th Infantry Division of Major General F.A. Prokhorov for de

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For nine days they fought for Liptovsky Mikulas and key heights. And, having paid a high price, they broke into the city and cleared it of the enemy, and under the influence of numerous "reckless counterattacks" were forced to leave it.

In mid-February, the 4th Ukrainian Front was stopped by the enemy at the line of Strumen, Zhywiec, Yablonka, Liptovsky-Sveti-Mikulas and went over to the defensive. According to the report of General Petrov: "The troops of the front retained their combat enthusiasm, but as a result of thirty days of fighting, the divisions were exhausted and reduced in personnel, thereby greatly reducing their offensive capabilities. In 38 A divisions are from 2800 to 3100 people, no more, in | | guards and 18 A - from 3300 to 4000 people.

The troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were fighting in two directions until mid-March: Zvolen, Banska Bystrica and Banska Stiavnica. During the month of fighting, their advance did not exceed 14-20 kilometers. In the period from 17 to 24 February, the Germans with a tank attack threw the 7th Guards Army from the bridgehead on the right bank of the Gron River. Instead of victorious salutes and thanks from the Supreme Marshal Malinovsky and General Shumilov, in the directive of the Stavka No. 11036, they received the highest reprimand for the unsatisfactory organization of hostilities:

"Recently, on some fronts, there have been cases of carelessness and idleness, using which the enemy managed to deliver sudden and sensitive blows to us. As a result of these strikes, our troops were forced to withdraw. The retreat in these cases was unorganized, the troops suffered heavy losses in manpower and especially in materiel. For example:

[. 7th Guards the army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, which was defending east of Komarno, being attacked by the enemy, failed to repulse its offensive, despite the sufficient number of forces and means, left the operationally important bridgehead occupied by it (on the western bank of the Hron River), losing this personnel - 8194 people, guns of various calibers - 459 (of which 76-mm and above - 374), tanks and self-propelled guns - 54 ...

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command believes that the

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These cases could only have occurred as a result of criminal carelessness, poor organization of defense, lack of reconnaissance and control on the part of higher commanders and their headquarters over the positions and actions of the troops.

The result of the January-February offensive of the 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts was the liberation of most of the territory of Slovakia and the southern regions of Poland. Coming with fights

over 170-230 kilometers, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front crossed most of the Western Carpathians and reached the upper reaches of the Vistula. The enemy lost over 137,000 prisoners, about 2,300 guns and mortars, 320 tanks and assault guns. Conditions were created for a further offensive with the aim of capturing the Moravian-Ostrava industrial complex.

By February 18, two Soviet fronts "decreased in strength" by 80 thousand people killed and wounded, two Romanian armies - by 12 thousand, the Czechoslovak corps lost 970 people. 359 tanks and self-propelled guns, 753 guns and mortars, 94 combat aircraft.

As early as February 13, General Petrov sent to Moscow a plan for a new operation, the ultimate goal of which was the liberation of Prague.

## OPERATION "ARGONAUT"

Now Marshal I.V. Stalin could safely go to the Crimea.

The tasks of ending the war in Europe and the problems of the post-war structure urgently required discussion and agreement on the policies of the Big Three. At the beginning of 1945, a final agreement was reached to convene a new conference with the participation of the heads of government of Great Britain, the USSR and the USA. At the suggestion of the Soviet side, Yalta was chosen as the venue. Churchill proposed to encrypt the event with the code word "Argonaut".

Prior to their arrival in the Crimea, the American and British delegations held their bilateral talks on the island of Malta. Their main task was to determine a coordinated plan of the allies in Western Europe and develop consolidated proposals on a wide range of issues. During the meeting, British Foreign Minister A. Eden said: "The Russians will have very big demands; we don't have much to offer them, but we need a lot from them. Therefore, we should agree to put together everything we want and everything we have to give. This would extend to the Far East as well." According to the calculations of the military, the war with Japan could be ended only a year and a half after the defeat of Germany. For this reason, the Americans believed that the negotiations at Yalta should be focused on obtaining a commitment from the Soviet Union to enter the war in the Far East.

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Roosevelt arrived in Malta on February 2. At a meeting with Churchill, he generally endorsed the decisions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, the president refused to bind the US to an agreement with the British on political issues. The Prime Minister continued to plan various combinations of penetration of the allied armies as deep as possible into the territory of Central and South-Eastern Europe and preventing the establishment of pro-Soviet puppet regimes there. According to Lord Moran's personal physician, "he no longer talks about Hitler, he talks about the dangers of communism. He imagines the picture of the Red Army, like a cancerous tumor, spreading from one country to another. It became an obsession with him." In his memoirs, Churchill does not hide the fact that he saw a new danger in the spread of Soviet hegemony: "The problems that arose in connection with victory, now close, were in no way inferior in their complexity to the worst dangers of war."

Roosevelt was much more interested in the price of the USSR's participation in the war with Japan and, by his own admission, did not care at all whether "the countries neighboring Russia would be communized or not." The American president saw great prospects in the global Soviet-American cooperation. There was no place in his plans for the British colonial system and there was no Churchill. Elliot Roosevelt, son of the president, recalled a conversation with his father:



"Don't lose sight of one circumstance. Winnie has one higher mission in life, but only one. He is the perfect wartime prime minister. His main, only task is to ensure that England survives the war. He has the perfect mindset for a military leader. But for Winston Churchill to lead England after the war? No, it will not

this."

Nevertheless, Roosevelt and Churchill arrived in the Crimea in an excellent mood. Stalin, who met them, was also in a good mood. The situation on the fronts in the light of the impressive successes of the Red Army inspired optimism and confidence in the imminent defeat of Germany, and the reason for the meeting

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It was such that it was not a sin to drink "wonderful Russian champagne": the heads of the three states gathered to divide Europe and decide the fate of the post-war world.

The main work of the conference was held in the Livadia Palace from 4 to 1 [ ] February. The discussion began with the question of coordinating the military plans of the three allied powers for the final defeat of Nazi Germany. The parties exchanged information on the situation on the fronts. Chief of the General Staff A.I. Antonov reported on the actions of the Soviet Armed Forces and summed up the results of the January offensive of the Red Army: in 18 days, Soviet troops advanced 500 kilometers, defeated 45 German divisions, the enemy lost about 300 thousand killed and about 100 thousand prisoners, the goal set by the High Command, has been achieved. General Antonov conveyed the desire of the USSR government to speed up the offensive of the Allied troops, as well as to prevent the transfer of enemy troops to the Eastern Front by air strikes on its communications. General George Marshall reported that the results of the German offensive in the Ardennes were eliminated, on February 8 the Allies hope to resume the offensive in the northern sector of the front, the crossing of the Rhine is considered possible in early March, and a strike in the southern sector will follow a week later. For active operations on the Italian front

strength is not enough.

Of course, Stalin did not fail to remind that the Red Army started the January offensive "earlier than planned", since the Soviet government considered it its moral duty, "the duty of an ally, although it had no formal obligations in this regard."

For the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who arrived in Yalta, the main interest was the issue of closer interaction with the Russians at the final stage of the war. However, to all requests by Field Marshal Alan Brook to exchange information on future operations, in particular, to consider the issue of coordinating actions in March and April, General Antonov each time gave the same answer: "Soviet troops will advance until

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weather conditions will permit. The American proposal to create special communication groups at the headquarters of the fronts to coordinate the actions of the allied ground forces and aviation, that is, so that the generals could resolve issues of tactical interaction directly, was rejected by the Soviet side - everything should be decided in Moscow. Then the conversation between the military went down.

On February 5, the heads of governments began to consider political problems. First of all, the German question was on the agenda.

The conditions worked out for unconditional surrender provided for the cessation of hostilities, the implementation of measures to disarm Germany and the establishment of the supreme power of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain in relation to it. The agreement on zones of occupation provided for the division of the country into three zones and the allocation of a special area of Berlin, occupied jointly by the three powers. The supreme power in Germany was to

carried out by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR, the USA and England, each in his own zone of occupation, on the directives of their governments, as well as jointly on issues affecting Germany as a whole. To carry out joint actions, it was envisaged that the three commanders-in-chief would form a Control Council.

All confidants were interested in a weak, incapable of new aggression and Germany under their control. The three powers proclaimed that their "uncompromising aim is the destruction of German militarism and Nazism and the assurance that Germany will never again

'will be able to disturb the peace of the whole world'. They declared their determination: - to disarm and disband all German armed forces, to destroy the German General Staff, to seize or destroy German military equipment, to liquidate or take control of all German industry that could be used for military purposes. Productions:

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- to subject all war criminals to just and severe punishment, "interpreting this term in a broad sense", and to recover damages for the destruction caused by the Germans;

— to wipe out the Nazi party, Nazi laws, organizations and institutions from the face of the earth;

— to eliminate any Nazi and militaristic influence from public institutions, from the cultural and economic life of the German people, "to carry out a serious ideological re-education of the German people."

On the issue of war criminals, the British Prime Minister recalled that in 1943 a decision was made to extradite them to the countries where they committed their crimes. But the "main criminals", in his opinion, must be condemned and shot before the eyes of the whole world. Moreover, the trial of them should be a political, not a legal act. This is how the idea of the Nuremberg Tribunal gradually took shape.

The soldiers in the trenches also dreamed up a lot on this topic:

"There was a discussion about what kind of execution to inflict on Adolf if he was suddenly caught. Most immediately suggested hanging by the balls. However, later everyone agreed with the project of Leshka Brichkin, an experienced scout, and by profession a director of a cemetery in Leningrad... army, sending natural needs to the Fuhrer's head. Let Adolf slowly sink into shit. Everyone liked this project and was unanimously approved by us."

It was clear that the period of occupation would have to last long enough to carry out such extensive transformations.

The leaders of the three powers assured that their goal "does not include the destruction of the German people." However, they also decided to dismember Germany. The British prime minister has been insisting on this for a long time. He proposed separating Prussia from Germany (which, in principle, was partially done) and forming a South German state with Vienna as its capital. He also indicated that consideration should be given to "in

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questions connected with the Rhine Valley, the border between France and Germany, and the question of the possession of the industrial regions of the Ruhr and the Saar. Taking advantage of the historical chance, the British dreamed of "abolishing Germany" once and for all. However, the plan proposed by US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau provided for the annexation of territories, the internationalization

Ruhr, the liquidation of heavy industry and the transformation of Germany into an agrarian country, or, as Goebbels noted, "into a huge potato field." In Tehran, Roosevelt expressed the idea of the need to decentralize government in Germany, but now he saw no other way out than dismemberment. And in the Stalinist safe was a note by I.M. Maisky "on the issues of the future world and the post-war system":

"In order to outline at least a general outline of the desirable conditions for the future world, it is necessary, first of all, to clearly formulate the specific goal towards which one is striving, for the goal to a very large extent determines the means. It seems to me that our specific goal in building the future world and post-war order should be to create a situation in which the security of the USSR and the preservation of peace would be guaranteed for a long time, at least in Europe and Asia. . What is meant by the term "long term"? I understand by this expression a period sufficient to:

a) The USSR has managed to become so powerful that it could no longer be afraid of any aggression in Europe or Asia. Moreover, no power or combination of powers in Europe or in Asia could even dream of such an intention.

\_ 6) Europe, at least continental Europe, has managed to become socialist, thus excluding the very "POSSIBILITY of wars breaking out in this part of the world...

The question of the future of Germany will come from the question that interests us.

Viewpoints are of course the main issue. It seems to me that here we should strive for the fullest possible "neutralization" of Germany for the period indicated above.

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term (30-50 years), i.e. to the creation of such conditions under which Germany could not even think of any aggression against anyone. From this point of view, in my opinion, it is necessary:

a) The occupation of strategically important points throughout Germany for a long period (at least 10 years). The size and severity of the occupation may, of course, vary according to the circumstances. Thus, for example, it is highly probable that in the first years after the war this occupation will be more intense and that in the future the size and severity of the occupation will gradually decrease. Nevertheless, the total duration of the occupation can hardly be less than 10 years, based on the above general orientation.

6) The fragmentation of Germany into a number of more or less independent state formations. I do not touch here more specifically on this topic, because fragmentation is a very complex issue, which is specially worked out in the Commission of comrade. Litvinov. I just note in this regard the need for this event. For my part, I will make only one remark. In England and the USA at the present time one can often hear the opinion that fragmentation is inexpedient, because it will only give rise among the Germans to the upsurge of the national movement and ultimately lead to the unification of the German nation. Some course of things is highly probable. Nevertheless, I still consider fragmentation useful, because it will be an important factor in the weakening of Germany for a long time, and overcoming fragmentation will require from the Germans a large expenditure of national energy, which otherwise could be directed in a more dangerous direction ...

The immediate period after the war must be marked by the retribution which Germany will deserve to bear for the crimes she has committed.

The neutralization of Germany is the most important condition for the security of the USSR and the maintenance of lasting peace in Europe. Another condition for the same is to prevent creation in

Europe of any other powers or combinations of powers with strong land armies. Benefits to us

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The worst of all is such a situation in which in the post-war period in Europe there would be only one powerful land power - the USSR and only one powerful maritime power - England.

Therefore, the question of the dismemberment of Germany was first on Comrade Stalin's list:

"Apparently, we all stand for the dismemberment of Germany. But it needs to be framed in the form of a solution. There is one more question. Shall we allow the formation of any central government in Germany, or shall we confine ourselves to the fact that an Administration will be created in Germany, or, if it is decided to dismember Germany, several governments will be created there according to the number of pieces into which Germany will be divided. ..

If we intend to dismember Germany, then we must say so."

In principle, it was decided to "dismember" and "deposit the details for the future". In the meantime, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs were instructed to consider Article 12 of the conditions for the unconditional surrender of Germany and to include in it the wording on the dismemberment of the country.

The draft decisions developed by the European Consultative Commission "On the zones of occupation of Germany and on the management of Greater Berlin" and "On the control mechanism in Germany" were approved.

At the suggestion of Roosevelt, although the initiative came from the British, the conference discussed the question of French participation in the occupation and a control mechanism for Germany. Churchill actively supported the idea, expressing his readiness to transfer part of the British occupation zone to the French: "It would be difficult for England alone to occupy Germany for a long time ... The British need a strong France, especially after the Americans leave Europe." Stalin, stubbornly, more for appearances, agreed. From Maisky's note: "In my opinion, it is beneficial for the USSR to contribute to the restoration of France as a more or less major European power, but it is unprofitable to make special efforts to revive its former military might."

It was specifically noted that France is not

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a member of the conferences of the three great powers, for it is "a very privileged club." The entrance fee to it is equal to 5 million soldiers.

At the initiative of the Soviet delegation, the conference discussed the issue of reparations, which was of particular interest to the Soviet Union, which suffered huge human and material losses. Material compensation was planned to be obtained by "one-time withdrawal of national wealth", that is, the export from Germany of factories, equipment for the military, heavy, chemical, aviation, electrical and other industries, ships, rolling stock of railways, etc. , and at the expense of annual commodity deliveries. In addition, the Germans had to work for ten years at Soviet construction sites. Reparations, on the one hand, were to serve the purposes of speedily restoring the damage inflicted on the USSR and other countries; have a debilitating effect on its economy and its military potential." The total amount of reparations in Moscow was estimated at 20 billion dollars, of which half was to be paid to the Soviet Union.

Roosevelt was not interested in the issue of reparations, but his advisers, as a positive thing, noted that the export of labor to the Soviet Union in conditions when enterprises in Germany itself would be destroyed and exported would help solve the issue of unemployment. Churchill refused to support the amount claimed, fearing that while the Russians would collect reparations, the British would have to feed the hungry Germans. It was decided to create a Reparations Commission, choosing Moscow as its seat.

One of the most important places at the Crimean Conference was occupied by the question of the establishment of the United Nations. The main provisions of the charter of the "general international security organization" were agreed upon by the representatives of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain in September 1944.

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However, the parties did not come to an agreement on a number of important issues: on the procedure for voting in the Security Council, on the participants in the founding conference, on the initial membership in the UN.

In Crimea, the Americans, taking into account the position of the Soviet Union, proposed a list of decisions that required the unconditional consent of the permanent members of the Security Council (thus giving them the right to "veto"), and a list of decisions on which any participant in the dispute had to abstain from voting on issues related to peaceful settlement of conflicts. The Soviet government announced its consent to accept the American proposal, and thus, to Roosevelt's unconcealed pleasure, one of the fundamental questions concerning the nature of the future international organization was resolved. In turn, the Soviet delegation achieved membership in the UN for the Ukrainian and Byelorussian SSRs, as republics of great political and economic importance and made a significant contribution to the overall victory over Germany.

In conclusion, it was decided that the founding conference of the United Nations would open on April 25, 1945, in San Francisco and that those states that would declare war on the "common enemy" could not participate in the work of this conference. later | Martha.

Issues related to the situation in a number of European countries were also discussed at the conference. Stalin reaffirmed his earlier agreement with Churchill to regard Greece as a purely British sphere of influence. The Soviet leader did not dispute the British American control over Italy either. On the Yugoslav question, a parity of interests was achieved. At the same time, it was clear to everyone, and not even discussed, that Eastern Europe was falling into the Soviet sphere of influence. A sharp political discussion was caused only by the question of the fate of Poland, which contained two aspects: the borders of the Polysy and the status of the Polish government.

London and Washington refused to recognize "Lublin

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government and continued to support the Polish government in exile in London. Churchill stated that, according to his knowledge, the Lublin government represented the views of no more than a third of the Poles, and the situation could lead to bloodshed, arrests and deportations. Roosevelt proposed the creation in Poland of a Presidential Council "consisting of a small number of prominent Poles", which would form a provisional government from representatives of all parties. Stalin insisted that only the already existing Provisional Polish Government could be the basis of an expanded government, although he did not rule out the possibility of the participation of some "democratic" leaders from emigre circles in it: "It is easier to reconstruct an existing government than

create something new."

Churchill: "Great Britain went to war with Germany in order to restore the freedom and sovereignty of Poland. Great Britain is interested in Poland because it is a matter of honor for Great Britain."

Stalin: "For the Russians, the question of Poland is not only a matter of honor, but also a matter of security. Throughout history, Polysya has always been a corridor through which the enemy came to attack Russia. The question of Poland is a question of life and death for the Soviet state."

There is already a legitimate government in Warsaw, which "qualifies the London Poles as traitors and traitors" and does not want to cooperate with them, no matter how Comrade Stalin persuades them: "Under what conditions, how to unite them? Comrade Stalin does not know this."

In the end, the wording of the Soviet delegation was adopted. Churchill and Roosevelt knew that Poland would have to be "surrendered" even before the conference began. What, by and large, could they offer Stalin, which he would not have already taken himself? Except the Dardanelles.

In the end, when in October 1944 Churchill and Stalin secretly divided on a piece of paper the spheres of influence in the Balkans (Romania: Russia - 90%, others - 10%; Greece: Great Britain - 90%, Russia - 10%; Yugoslavia — 50 to 50%, Hungary — 50 to 50%, Bulgaria: Russia — 75%, others — 25%,

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The prime minister himself assured the secretary general that "the British government fully sympathizes with the desire of Marshal Stalin to ensure the existence of a Poland friendly to the Soviet Union."

Stalin proposed the "Curzon Line" as the eastern Polish frontier. Roosevelt, supported by Churchill, suggested that the USSR "generously" return Lvov to the Poles, but Iosif Vissarionovich could not offend the Ukrainians. In the west and in the north, Poland was to receive a significant increase in its territory through the "redevelopment" of Germany - part of East Prussia and the land up to the Oder. The Soviet delegation suggested inserting into the document a phrase about the return of the "originally Polish territories" to the Poles and met Roosevelt's categorical objection: "What is meant by the expression 'original territories'? If we have in mind the lands that belonged to this or that state 100 or 150 years ago, then now, perhaps, Churchill may want to get the USA. The final determination of the western border of Poland was postponed until a peace conference."

From a note by Maisky: "The goal of the USSR should be the creation of an independent and viable Poland, but we are not interested in the birth of too big and too strong Poland. In the past, Poland has almost always been an enemy of Russia, whether the future Poland will become a true friend of the USSR (at least for the next generation), no one can say with certainty. Many doubt this, and it is fair to say that there are sufficient grounds for such doubts."

'vania. In view of the foregoing, it is more cautious to shape 'post-war Poland' in the smallest possible size, 'strictly following the principle of ethnographic boundaries. Specifically, the eastern border of Poland should pass along the border of 1941 or close to it, and Lvov and Vilna under any conditions should remain within the USSR. In the West, the whole of East Prussia, or, perhaps, better, part of it, and certain parts of Silesia, can be included in Poland, But with the eviction of the Germans from there.

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An agreement was also reached between the three allied powers on the issues of the Far East, which provided for the entry of the USSR into the war against Japan. To this step, the Allies have been pushing "Uncle Joe" since December 1941. In October 1944, Stalin made a commitment

start a war with Japan three months after Germany's surrender, but also hinted that "the Soviet Union must know what it will fight for."

In Yalta, an agreement was reached "on the political aspects" of the war with Japan and the strengthening of the positions of the USSR in the Far East. It was about the preservation of the status of Mongolia, the return of South Sakhalin to the Soviet Union, the transfer of the Kuril Islands, the restoration of the naval base in Port Arthur, the joint Soviet-Chinese possession of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Southern Moscow Railway. These conditions formed the basis of a secret agreement signed on February 11, 1945. Immediately after the conference, the General Staff of the Red Army began to develop plans for a war with Japan.

In the final protocol of the Yalta Conference, the Declaration on a Liberated Europe was adopted, which, however, remained a declaration.

On February 12, at 11:30 pm Moscow time, radio stations in Moscow, London and Washington simultaneously sounded the final communiqué of the conference, which became the pinnacle of cooperation between the three great powers of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The Yalta Conference was not the most important of the wartime conferences, the main decisions were taken in Washington, Cairo and Tehran. But it was in Yalta that plans for the final defeat of the Third Reich were agreed upon, a range of issues related to the territorial and political reorganization of Europe was outlined, the return of France to the rank of great powers was sanctioned, the foundations of the post-war order of the world were laid, and controversial issues related to with the creation of the United Nations.

This was the last meeting of the Big Three.

#### TO BERLIN! SECOND ATTEMPT

Meanwhile, in the main direction, after a short hitch and a regrouping of forces, it was decided to move on to the second, decisive stage of the Berlin operation.

The main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front were again redirected by the Headquarters of the All-Russian Command in accordance with the original plan. By a directive of February 8, Marshal Rokossovsky was ordered to go on the offensive west of the Vistula, capture the area of Danzig, Gdynia and clear the coast of the Baltic Sea from the enemy up to the Pomeranian Bay. Thus, the right flank of Zhukov was secured, over which the forces of the Vistula Army Group hung. As Rokossovsky's formations advanced towards the lower Oder, the armies of the right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front were released and were to advance to the Berlin direction.

Marshal Zhukov approved the preliminary plan for the capture of Berlin on January 27th. By order No. 00184 dated January 28, the commander oriented the armies to a further offensive to the west: the 5th shock - to Bernau, which is north of Berlin; 8th Guards - on Bukkov, Alt-Landsberg; 69th - on Bussen, Herfeld. Thus, three combined arms armies aimed at Berlin, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was to cover it from the northwest, and the 1st from the north.  
east.

On February 4, Zhukov gave the following directive to subordinate troops:

"I am reporting tentative calculations for the coming period and a brief assessment of the situation:

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1. The enemy in front of the 1st Belorussian Front does not have any large counterattack groups  
It has.

The enemy does not have a continuous front of defense. It is now covering certain areas and in a number of areas is trying to solve the problem of defense by active actions.

We have preliminary information that the enemy has withdrawn four tank divisions and 5-6 infantry divisions from the Western Front and is transferring these units to the Eastern Front. At the same time, the enemy continues to transfer units from the Baltic states and East Prussia.

Apparently, in the next 6-7 days, the enemy will concentrate troops brought in from the Baltic states and East Prussia on the Schwedt-Stargad-Neustettin line in order to cover Pomerania and prevent our access to the Pomeranian Bay.

The enemy, apparently, is concentrating a group of troops being transferred from the West in the area of Berlin with the task of defending the approaches to Berlin.

2. The tasks of the troops of the front are to consolidate the success achieved in the next 6 days by active actions, to bring up everything that is lagging behind, to replenish supplies up to two refueling stations, up to two ammunition loads, and to take Berlin with a swift throw on February 15-16.

When consolidating success, that is, from February 4 to February 9, you must:

a) 5th, 6th, 69th, 33rd armies to seize bridgeheads on the western bank of the river. Oder. At the same time, it is desirable for the 8th Guards and 69th armies to have one common bridgehead between Kustrin and Frankfurt. If possible, it would be good to connect the bridgeheads of the 5th and 8th armies;

6) The 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 47th, 61st, 2nd Tank Armies and the 2nd Cavalry Corps must push the enemy back behind the Ratiburg-Falkenburg-Stargard-Altdam-R. Oder. After that, leaving a barrier until the approach of the armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front, regroup on the river. Oder for a breakthrough;

c) on February 7-6 it is necessary to complete the liquidation of the Poznan-Schneidemühl group of the enemy;

d) the means of reinforcement for a breakthrough basically remain the same as the armies now have;

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e) for tank troops and self-propelled artillery, by February 10, complete current repairs and put the materiel into operation;

f) aviation to complete deployment with 6 refuelings at airfields;

g) the rear of the front, the army and military rear by February 9-10 to be fully prepared for the decisive stage of the operation.

Konev also rushed to Berlin. The marshal planned to strike the main blow from two large bridgeheads on the Oder - north and south of Breslau: new grouping directly to Berlin. In twenty days it was planned to be on the Elbe.

The directive of the Military Council of the 1st Ukrainian Front of January 31 stated:

"The armies of the front on 6.2.45 go over to a decisive offensive in the general direction of Sprottau, Cottbus, Yutrbog with the task of defeating the Breslav grouping of the enemy and on 25.2.45 with the main forces to reach the Elbe River. Take Berlin by the right wing of the front in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front..."

The troops of the left wing of the front received the task of defeating the enemy in the Dresden direction.

Konev's plan was approved by the Supreme Commander on January 29.



"Consequently, the opinions of all agreed on one thing - it is necessary to continue the unceasing offensive and take control of Berlin," writes Shtemenko. - The fronts received the necessary instructions from Moscow on this score and, in turn, set tasks for the armies.

The General Staff was concerned about only one detail: "How can the attack on Berlin by two fronts be coordinated with Stalin's instructions that the German capital be taken by troops under the command of G.K. Zhukov? After a heated debate, it was proposed to approve the decisions of both front commanders. The Headquarters agreed with this, however, the demarcation line between the fronts was established on the basis of the recommendations of Marshal Zhukov ... Such a demarcation line actually wiped out the 1st Ukrainian Front south of Berley

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on, leaving him no window to attack the German capital; its right wing was heading for Guben and Brandenburg.

It turned out to be an obvious absurdity: on the one hand, they approved the decision of Marshal Konev - to attack Berlin with the right wing, and on the other hand, they established a dividing line that did not allow this. We only counted on the fact that we were still far from Berlin and that we would be able to eliminate the absurdity that had arisen. During the operation, the situation itself had to make the necessary correction. And so it happened."

#### LOWER SILESIAN OPERATION

The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were the first to start again (in the same composition - 66 rifle and 3 cavalry divisions, total number - 981 thousand people). However, they did not have any pause. While some armies were regrouping, others were fighting fierce battles to expand the bridgeheads captured on the Oder and were cleaning up the territory, eliminating the "wandering boilers" of the enemy.

During this time, a shock fist was created on the bridgehead north of Breslau as part of the 3rd Guards, 13th, 52nd, 6th General Armies, 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies, 25th Tank and 7th Guards Mechanized buildings. Combined-arms armies had an operational formation in one echelon. The tank armies of Lelyushenko and Rybalko lined up at the back of the head of the troops of Pukhov and Koroteev, who were also supposed to take part in breaking through the German defenses, and then, building on their success, rush to the "lair of the fascist beast." Therefore, the advanced detachments of the tank corps - reinforced tank brigades - were located directly in the combat formations of the infantry. Konev remained true to himself: "In this situation, I considered such a decision to be completely justified. Without this, our rifle divisions, weary of long battles and largely drained of blood, would not have solved the tasks facing them, although, in general, we managed to create a superiority in forces in the breakthrough areas. The superiority in forces over the Germans north of Breslau is

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pitchfork 2.3 : | in infantry, tanks and artillery, a 6-7-fold superiority was achieved. The tankers were given the task of capturing the crossings across the Beaver River by the end of the first day of the operation, and on the fifth day, breaking into Cottbus.

South of Breslau, the 5th Guards and 21st Armies were concentrated with the 4th Guards and 31st Tank Corps attached to them. Together with the 6th army of Gluzdovsky, they were supposed to surround Breslau, then strike at Dresden. In the meantime, Zhadov and Gusev were busy with the stubborn garrison of the town of Brig on the western bank of the Oder.

On the left wing of the front, from the bridgehead created southwest of Oppeln, a third grouping consisting of the 59th, 60th armies and the 1st guards cavalry corps was to operate, striking along the northern slopes of the Sudetenland.

The opposing forces of Army Group Center were estimated at 19 infantry, 4 tank, 2 tank-grenadier divisions, 7 combat groups, 1 tank brigade and the Breslau corps group. The average number of each of the divisions did not exceed five thousand people. General Sh @ Erner did not have operational reserves.

The Soviet troops, weakened in the previous offensive, also experienced certain difficulties: communications turned out to be stretched up to 500 kilometers, the rear bases of the front remained east of the Vistula, which, in the conditions of the beginning slush, seriously complicated the organization of rear supplies. A large amount of damaged equipment has accumulated in the tank armies. General Rybalko had 348 serviceable "thirty-fours" and 208 self-propelled guns, 125 combat vehicles needed repair. In addition, the 9th Mechanized Corps was located on the left wing of the front, providing access to the Oder for the troops of the 60th Army. In the army of General Lelyushenko, 414 tanks and self-propelled guns were in service, and a tank was under repair.

However, the situation required the continuation of active hostilities in order to prevent the enemy from creating a solid defense on the line of the Oder. Konev was determined "to overthrow the enemy, who had not yet had time to come

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after our January strikes, and on his shoulders to move further west.

In view of the unpreparedness of the troops of the front for the initially appointed time, the marshal gave the order to postpone the start of the offensive for three days. It began at 9:30 am on February 8, 1945. Artillery preparation lasted 50 minutes. For longer processing of the leading edge, there was not enough ammunition. Unfavorable weather interfered with air operations.

The operation was difficult. The enemy met the attackers with organized fire. The struggle immediately took on a stubborn character, especially in settlements where stone buildings predominated. The offensive was in the nature of a slow "gnawing through" the defense of the fiercely resisting enemy. Snow melting began, the soil turned out to be impassable even for caterpillar vehicles. This forced the Soviet troops to operate mainly along the roads, reducing the maneuverability of tank formations.

On the extreme left flank, the 59th and 60th armies themselves hardly repulsed enemy counterattacks and could not break out of the bridgehead. On February 10, Konev ordered Generals Korovnikov and Kurochkin to go on the defensive.

Only by the end of the second day did the main grouping of the front break through the tactical defense zone of the enemy: the 6th Guards Tank Corps of the Rybalko army crossed Bober with one brigade and entrenched itself on the western bank, but its main forces reached the river only a day later. 7th Guards Tank Corps of General S.A. Ivanov on February 10 went to Bunzlau. However, only infantry was able to be transferred to the western bank of the Bober River, the establishment of tank crossings was hindered by the active operations of German aviation, while 2830 combat aircraft of the 2nd Air Army were "forced to be inactive" due to muddy airfields and "non-flying weather." The pilots of General Krasovsky made only 546 sorties per day, performing, in essence, only reconnaissance tasks. In order to somehow help the ground forces, the 9th and 22nd Guards Fighter Divisions were used as runways

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sections of the Breslau-Berlin motorway. 9th Mechanized Corps of General M.V. Volkova by this moment had just finished crossing the Oder. The tanks had to be transferred to the bridgehead by ferries, since the Germans, having opened the gates of the reservoirs, caused a flood that demolished almost all the bridges built by the sappers.

The 6th Guards Mechanized Corps of Lelyushenko's army reached the Bober River north of Zagan on February 11 and, having mastered the crossing, slipped to the western bank on the move. Then he began to advance to the area

Sommerfeld. At the same time, the 10th Guards Tank Corps seized a dam and a hydroelectric power station in the Zagana region, crossed Bober on February 12, and a day later started a battle for the city of Zorau. Embraced by the "pincers" of two corps of the 4th Panzer Army, units of the 20th Panzergrenadier Division, the "Brandenburg" and "Hermann Goering" DIVISIONS wandered in the forests northwest of Luben. However, the "cauldron" could not be shut down: General von Sauke, with a strike to the west, broke through the flimsy Soviet barriers and brought the remnants of the "Grossdeutschland" corps out of the encirclement in the Sprottau area. Instead of Colonel N.D. Chuprov, Lieutenant General E.E. took command of the 10th Guards Corps. Belov. After capturing Zorau, which was taken by the end of February 13, the 4th Panzer Army, without looking back at the flanks, rushed to the Neisse River.

Meanwhile, in the center, three Soviet armies were treading water near the walls of Breslau. Commander-6, which was making a detour from Liegnitz in order to encircle the enemy grouping, had to devote a significant part of its forces to securing its right flank. The weakened left-flank formations were stopped at the approaches to Breslau by counterattacks of the 19th Panzer and 254th Infantry Divisions. As a result, the troops of the 6th Army could not manage to unite with the 5th Guards Army of Zhadov, which was advancing from the south. Which, in turn, hampered the advance of Gusev's 21st Army.

As General K.V. Krainyukov: "In addition to our will, the center of the struggle has moved to the Breslau region."

In an effort to quickly put an end to the "fortress" around which

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the swarm turned out to be impermissibly large forces, Marshal Konev on February 12 gave a number of new orders. In connection with the turn of the army of General Gluzdovsky by the front to the southeast, in order to cover the left flank of the shock group of the front, the troops of the 52nd Army had to be deployed to the south. At the same time, the 5th Guards Army, which already had the 4th Guards Tank Corps under operational control, was reinforced by the 31st Tank Corps and the 3rd Guards Division of heavy rocket launchers. Baranov's cavalry corps was transferred from the left wing to the center. Finally, General Rybalko received an order to turn the main forces of his army 180 degrees: the 7th Guards Tank Corps and the 9th Mechanized Corps were to develop an offensive from Bunzlau in a southeast direction to Yauer, Schrigau, completing the encirclement the Breslav group; The 6th Guards Tank Corps was to continue moving westward in order to reach the Görlitz area by the morning of February 13th.

During February 13, the tank and mechanized corps attached to the 6th and 5th Guards Armies, advancing towards each other, connected west of Breslau. On the same day, having made a swift maneuver, the corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army arrived in the Striegau area, hitting the flank of the 19th Panzer Division of General Hans Kellner, who was desperately trying to hold the last path to Breslau. On February 15, the rifle divisions of the 6th Army met with the divisions of the 5th Guards Army. Using the success of the tankers, the infantry condensed the encirclement, creating a solid front. At the same time, the brigades of the 9th Mechanized Corps repelled the attacks of the enemy's 8th Panzer Division, which was trying to break through to the besieged from Waldenburg. 6th Guards Tank Corps of General V.V. Novikov | February 5 crossed the Kveis River north of Naumburg and repulsed the counterattacks of the enemy, who was trying to liquidate the bridgehead. The 7th Guards Tank Corps, again turning to the west, hit Levenberg.

The 4th Tank Army reached the Neisse River that day: the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps, Colonel V.F. Or

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fishing together with the units of the 112th Infantry Division of Colonel D.T. Zhukov captured the settlements of Zadersdorf and Gross-Gastrose on the western beret, and the 10th Panzer was preparing to force the river near the city of Forst. However, the rifle divisions of the 13th Army of Pukhov lagged behind the tankers by almost 60 kilometers and were located further east of the Bober River:

"The area was wooded, swampy in places. The Nazis, retreating, stubbornly resisted. The physical fatigue of our soldiers also affected. They showed amazing perseverance and perseverance. Nevertheless, the average daily infantry advance rate was now only 8-12 kilometers. And more from her, in conscience, could not be demanded.

The enemy was quick to take advantage of the situation, repulsing the attempts of the 13th Army to cross the Bober River and on February 15, with counter attacks north and south of the town of Benau, cut off the communications of the 4th Panzer Army. General Lelyushenko had to stop and cover his rear and defend his own headquarters. Only in the afternoon of February 19, through the joint efforts of the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps deployed to the east and the 101st Rifle Corps [13th Army] advancing towards it, communications were restored. The commander of the 4th German Panzer Army, General Greser, ordered to play a retreat. In the battles for Benau, the commander of the 68th anti-aircraft artillery division, Colonel A.F. Kozlov and the commander of the 22nd self-propelled artillery brigade, Lieutenant Colonel V.I. Prikhodko.

On the right flank of the front, the 3rd Guards Army of Gordov, blocking the 18,000-strong garrison of the Glogau fortress, advanced to the northwest with its main forces and by February 15 reached the mouth of the Bober River.

Thus, in eight days, at the cost of enormous efforts, the armies of the right wing of the front covered 60-100 kilometers, captured bridgeheads on the western bank of the Bober River, and occupied a number of administrative and industrial centers of Lower Silesia. Two German garrisons remained in the rear, surrounded in Breslau and Glogau. I will not move the armies of the left wing

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got out of place. In rifle divisions, there were an average of 4.5 thousand people. Tank and mechanized troops lost more than half of the vehicles, 1289 tanks and self-propelled guns were in service.

The march to the Elbe failed. Including because "at the end of January we underestimated the enemy's ability to restore the combat capability of our units and formations that we defeated on the Vistula and Oder. He did it much faster and more decisively than we could have imagined." Of course, the backlog of the rear and the lack of artillery ammunition, the consumption of which exceeded all conceivable norms, had an effect. But the main role was played by the fact that the armies of Marshal Zhukov did not go to Berlin ...

Having summed up the results, the Military Council concluded that the front no longer had the necessary forces and means to continue hostilities in accordance with the original plan. On February 16, Konev reported to Headquarters a new plan for conducting an operation with more limited goals.

The main grouping of the front, consisting of the 3rd Guards, 13th, 52nd, and 4th Tank Armies, was to reach the Neisse River, seize a bridgehead on its left bank, and firmly gain a foothold on the reached line. The 3rd Guards Tank Army was to capture the Görlitz area and hold it until the main forces of the 52nd Army approached. The 5th Guards Army was withdrawn from the battles for Breslau to the outer front of the encirclement in order to prevent the deblockade of the city. The 21st, 59th and 60th armies of the left wing, reinforced by the 4th and 31st tank corps, were supposed to push the enemy back into the Sudetenland. Breslau was to be captured by the troops of the 6th Army. At the same time, it was planned to restore railways, supply and accumulate ammunition and fuel for the troops, repair military equipment and put the rear in order.

The stake approved these proposals.

On February 16, the 3rd Guards Army captured the crossing over the Bober in the Grossen area and entrenched itself on two bridgeheads south of the city. From them she launched an attack on a large

the industrial center and a strong stronghold on the Neisse River is the city of Guben. Successful actions of Gor connections

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dovs, who reached the Neisse on February 20, facilitated the advance of the 13th Army, which took over sectors from Lelyushenko's battered tank army. The latter lost 257 tanks and self-propelled guns (irretrievably - 127 combat vehicles) and was withdrawn to the rear on February 22 to put in order and resupply.

On February 24, the entire right bank of the Neisse, 110 kilometers long, from the mouth to the city of Penzig, was controlled by the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which came into line with the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front. True, it was not possible to win a foothold on the western bank of the river.

At that time, on the left flank of the strike force, where the formations of the 3rd Guards Tank Army were rushing towards Görlitz, a real battle unfolded, fraught with "unpleasant episodes" for the Soviet troops.

On February 16, the 7th Guards Tank Corps captured Levenberg, and a day later, the main forces in the area of the city and the Lauban railway station reached the Kveiss River, but could not force it, faced with stubborn resistance from the 17th Tank and 6th people's grenadier divisions. At the direction of the commander, the tank brigades crossed the Kveis in the sector of the 6th tank corps. After that, the brigades began to descend south along the western beret of the river, bypassing Lauban from the northwest, and the motorized riflemen started a battle directly in the city. Meanwhile, the 9th mechanized corps was advancing from Striegau to Levenberg. But the Germans did not yawn either: they transferred the 8th Panzer Division to the area between Levenberg and Lauban, which attacked the weakened flank of Ivanov's tank corps. In front of the army front, units of the 408th Infantry and 10th Panzer-Grenadier Divisions were also "marked". There was a real danger of an enemy breakthrough in the interfluvium of the Kveis and Bober, a breakthrough that would cut through Rybalko's troops and lead the German Grouping to the rear of the 52nd and 13th armies.

Konev recalls: "For two or three days the situation was so difficult that it caused concern among us, and even at Headquarters.

On the day when the German units began to go to the rear of the 3rd Panzer Army, Stalin called me and expressed his alarm.

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Gu: "What is happening there in the third tank army? Where is she located there?"

I replied that Rybalko's army was fighting very intense battles in the Lauban area, but I think that nothing special had happened to it. The army is fighting in a difficult situation, but this is a common thing for tank troops. Stalin's call found me at the command post of the 52nd Army, not far from Lauban. I assured the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that if the situation worsens, we will take all necessary measures on the spot."

Over the following days, the 6th Guards Tank Corps continued to advance in the direction of Görlitz, reaching the Neisse River in the Penzig area on February 21, the 7th Guards Tank Corps fought a fierce battle in Lauban and its environs, and the 9th the mechanized corps between Lauban and Levenberg repulsed the attacks of the 8th Panzer Division:

"Individual heights and settlements passed from hand to hand several times. In the city of Lauban and other settlements, the enemy widely used faustpatrons against our tanks. Our units used Faust cartridges taken from the enemy to shoot at stone buildings and to repel counterattacks from enemy tanks. The fights were fierce and stubborn

character. Meanwhile, units of the army, approaching Lauban, were greatly weakened, having a large shortage in tanks and people.

On February 21, the 7th Guards Tank Corps had 55 tanks in service, and the 9th Mechanized Corps had 48 tanks. From the reserve of the front, General Rybalko was transferred to the 9th and 26th destroyer anti-tank artillery brigades deployed on the front from Levenberg to Lauban. K. On February 25, rifle formations of the 52nd Army approached this area.

In Silesia and Brandenburg, the Soviet "avengers" behaved in the same way as in Pomerania and Prussia. And here the Stadts and Dorfs were burning.

As Sergei Gorulev, a veteran of the 23rd Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade, recalls:

"With the arrival of our troops in Germany, self-defense detachments were created in every settlement - Volkssturm detachments of young men aged 15-17 who were not drafted into the army, and old people over 60 years old.

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These detachments, also armed with machine guns, light machine guns and dozens of faustpatrons, occupied the second and third floors of the houses and opened fire on us from the windows. Tanks caught fire like matchboxes. In many Volkssturm detachments there were also girls 17-20 years old. These young people were brought up and devoted to Hitler. They fought to the last bullet, but did not give up. Often they died. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the young people ran away, hid their weapons, and then, when the opportunity arose, they fired at our soldiers and officers from an ambush. It was very difficult to fight the Volkssturm, since they were all in civilian uniform and often mixed with the crowd. In our brigade, half of the personnel were young people born in 1924-1926. Almost all Red Army soldiers lived temporarily in the territory occupied by the Germans. They experienced all the horrors of the German invaders, so many longed for the moment when they find themselves on German territory in order to avenge their suffering and the humiliation of their relatives. Having entered Germany, they enthusiastically set fire to and destroyed buildings, houses, various structures.

And a lot of other things were done by the vazarte:

"The corpses of numerous civilians shot by Soviet soldiers from the 6th Army were found in Liegnitz. In the town of Kostenblut near Neumarkt, captured by units of the 7th Guards Tank Corps, women and girls were raped, including the mother of 8 children who was in the process of being demolished. Her brother, who tried to intercede for her, was shot dead. All foreign prisoners of war were shot, as well as 6 men and 3 women. Mass rape did not escape the sisters from the Catholic hospital. Pilgramsdorf near Goldberg was the scene of numerous murders, rapes and arsons by servicemen of the 23rd Guards Motor Rifle Brigade. In Beralsdorf, a suburb of Lauban, 39 still remaining women were dishonored "in the meanest way" by Soviet soldiers from the 7th Guards Tank Corps ... "

Our tankers never reached Görlitz.

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Take Breslau also failed. The garrison of the "fortress" was made up of a variety of units: the remnants of the 269th Infantry Division, training and reserve units, an SS regiment, Luftwaffe ground formations, Volkssturm battalions, police and Hitler Youth detachments, artillery batteries and a company of assault guns - the whole order 45-50 thousand people, including 15 thousand Volkssturm. Approximately 200,000 "non-combatants" still remained in the city. Around Breslau, two defensive belts were erected, covered with a dense web of minefields, warehouses of provisions and ammunition were built, residential areas were prepared for defense, and bridges across the Oder were mined. In addition, the supply of the garrison is carried out

elk transport "Junkers", which landed at the Gandau airfield at night, and dropped containers on cargo parachutes during the day. Instead of the seriously ill General Krause, on February 2, the commander of the Army Group Center appointed the active colonel Hans von Alphen, who was soon promoted to major general, who survived and left memories, as the commandant: "We had quite enough food, since Silesia was then transfer point. There was an acute shortage of weapons and ammunition... Chaos reigned in vehicles. As for the fortifications, they were mainly buildings from the period of 1914. Against all these minuses there was only one plus. It consisted in the presence not only of the troops, but also of a significant part of the population of a strong will not only to fight for the salvation of their own lives, but also the desire to serve a strategic goal. In general, they were not going to surrender and hoped for help from outside: the distance from Breslau to the front line was only 20-25 kilometers.

If the enemy does not surrender, he is destroyed.

Marshal Konev assigned the liquidation of the encircled German group to General V.A. Gluzdovsky. The 6th Army included the 218th, 273rd, 181st, 309th, 359th rifle divisions, the 77th fortified area, an engineer brigade, and two flamethrower battalions. There were no tanks and self-propelled guns, from artillery

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lerii - at first nothing serious, except for the cannon art brigade. These forces were supposed to "quickly deal with" Breslau and withdraw the 6th Army into the reserve of the front. Already after the Soviet commanders figured out what "nut" they got, the former chief of staff of the 359th rifle division, Colonel G.S. Khovrin compiled a description of the fortress:

"The layout of the fortified city of Breslau and the nature of its development contributed to the enemy in creating a powerful defense at a strategically important water line.

Stone walls of enormous protective power on the metal fittings of residential buildings and industrial buildings made up quarters in the form of squares, rectangles and other geometric shapes, each of which was an independent fortress. Under houses and buildings, railway tracks passed through certain districts of the city, where there were wagons and tanks with a large supply of food and water. The dungeons were equipped with bomb shelters, bunkers and warehouses. Long underground corridors ran in different directions of the city.

All underground communication routes between quarters and districts of the city allowed the Germans to maneuver with forces and means, even such as artillery and mortars. The enemy often used this when the division captured the territory of the city, and the Germans reappeared in our rear. They also used underground stone trenches through which water supply, power supply lines, and sewerage passed to send saboteurs and scouts into our rear.

Machine guns, snipers and submachine gunners, tank destroyers and demolition workers with faustpatrons, which were used to destroy our artillery and the destruction of houses and buildings where the infantry of the division's units was concentrated.

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necks, firing positions of artillery and mortars, trenches for individual firing points and mine explosive devices. The main main streets leading to the city center were blocked

barricades, barbed wire and mines.

Numerous plants and factories, railway junctions turned into strongholds and defense centers. The district railway lines were located at a considerable distance from the western and especially the southern outskirts of the city. All of them passed on high mounds, insurmountable for our tanks, and were advantageous defensive positions for the enemy. The main highways and highways passing into the city under the embankment were blocked by railway bridges prepared for undermining and blocking the passage to the city.

The assault on Breslau began on 16 February. Attacks came first from the south, and then from the west and north. The non-simultaneity of strikes allowed the defenders to maneuver their forces. Bloody battles were fought for every street, every house, apartment or basement, especially fierce battles unfolded on the outskirts of the airfield and in the industrial area of the city. Pressing the enemy, the Soviet assault groups demolished and burned everything in their path, used underground communications to reach the rear of the enemy. To destroy obstacles and make passages in minefields, craftsmen from the 42nd mechanized engineering brigade set up handicraft production of "sapper torpedoes" from captured aerial bombs — 100-kilogram cigars made from melted TNT, the basis of which was rocket projectiles. Another innovator, Captain N.A. Kropotov from the 1194th Rifle Regiment, "developed a device for using KS bottles with incendiary liquid from anti-tank rifles (?) at a distance of 200 meters with good hitting accuracy. This use of KS bottles literally stunned the Germans."

The German consolidated detachments, when withdrawing, blew up and set fire to buildings in the same way, destroyed tunnels and sewers, "so that the enemy would not go over to an underground war," and

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they used "land torpedoes" — judging by the descriptions of the participants in the battle, these were remote-controlled tankettes of the Goliath type. Perfectly oriented "on the ground", the defenders of the fortress often infiltrated into the quarters already cleared by the Russians, again consolidated, and all started over.

The more the city was destroyed, the more insurmountable obstacles arose before the attacking troops. Breslau was turning into a "German Stalingrad".

"This is how it all happened," says Khovrin. "For a day, and sometimes more, we used powerful firepower to destroy houses and buildings that were occupied by the enemy defending himself on the other side of the street, alley or highway of the city. Having weakened its fire system, we broke into the ruins of houses and buildings, where it was even impossible to place a machine gun, not to mention a mortar or gun. And the enemy went into completely intact houses and buildings, creating there again a system of fire. Under these conditions, he destroyed our units, swarmed in brick and stone scrap, in order to quickly and somehow hide from enemy fire. After we nevertheless created a system of fire to destroy the newly prepared German positions, everything was repeated every day and we suffered large, unjustified losses of people. The practice of destroying houses and buildings was an immutable law that turned against us.

Leaving the destroyed positions, the Germans mined the remaining houses and buildings in order to blow them up later when they were occupied by our forces and means for shelter. If somewhere the enemy did not have enough forces and firepower to defend individual houses and buildings, and sometimes an entire defensive position, they arranged focal and continuous mass fires there. This forced our units and subunits to bypass them.

General K.K. Krainyukov "frankly admits" that the first days of the assault were marked by "a somewhat increased percentage of losses," and recalled "that without knowledge of the



urban combat, without continuous reconnaissance and clear cooperation, success is impossible.  
Translated from Commissioner

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it means - they washed themselves with blood. In the following days, the "percentage" did not decrease at all.

Chief of Staff of the 22nd Rifle Corps Colonel A.P. Chichin recorded in his personal diary (published by Alexei Shlykov):

"17.02.45. Breslau is surrounded. We are on the southwestern edge. In the city, everyone from 15 to 60 years old is armed. Resist to death...

18.02.45. Klettendorf, a suburb of Breslau. Breslau is protected from young to old. Our soldiers retaliate ruthlessly. An order was given: not to shoot the prisoners and the civilian population, but they do not help. Urgent measures must be taken, we must not become barbarians.

02/27/45. Critern, a suburb of Breslau. We gnaw on the block like toothless nuts. Big losses, especially in the command staff. Missing ammo. The resistance is fierce."

At the end of February, a paratrooper battalion was airlifted to Breslau. The formations of the Wehrmacht in the city were merged into the 609th Special Purpose Division. On March 5, Scherner appointed Lieutenant General Nikof as the commandant of Breslau, and in order to raise morale, he promised to break the blockade soon and reminded that in the event of the loss of the city, not only the general himself, but also the children, of whom Nikof had five, could suffer. I must say, on quite legal grounds: with || On August 1944, German servicemen were subject to a provision on treason, an analogue of Stalin's order No. 270. This provision legitimized the arrests of relatives.

Diary again:

"03/11/45. Breslau, southern part, quarter 665. Things are bad. The losses are heavy, and only 1/4 of the city is taken. Time plays into the hands of the pr-ka. And he's pissed off...

03/15/45. Breslau, quarter 665, Kleinburg street. Depression with great losses in people. In the fourth year, I learned what war is in big cities. Budapest and Breslau are vivid examples of our regulations, which will still be written after the war. Destruction strikes...

03/27/45. Breslau, Hohenzollern street. There is no success. At

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ranks: little infantry, no interaction with aircraft, no artillery takes cellars, and there is no way to use it in street battles. The Germans are strong with faustpatrons and cellars. Standing to death... "

The "air bridge" worked for a little over a month, about 6 thousand wounded were taken out of the city. On April 1, Soviet troops captured the Gandau airfield. The position of the fortress became hopeless, further defense from a military point of view - pointless, but the city continued to hold on - on faith, fear, iron discipline. The same nonsense was the assault that continued with increasing force.

The 294th rifle division and the 349th guards regiment of heavy self-propelled guns were successively transferred to Gluzdovsky's army, then the 112th rifle division, the 71st anti-aircraft artillery division, two tank regiments, two more flamethrower battalions, two artillery divisions special power, guards mortars. From the air, the city was continuously bombarded by one assault and two bomber air corps.

But that didn't change much:

"04/10/45. Broccau, a suburb of Breslau. I will tell posterity how we took Breslau, how we fought with the Volkssturm: until you blow up the basement, apartment, entrance or the whole house, these Volkssturms fight to the death. And behind, behind their backs - "ES-ES".

04/19/45. And the devil knows what a hard time brought us here! We do not have sufficient forces for a decisive assault. Resistant infantry with Faustpatrons in such a big city is indefatigably OLIIMMA ... "

Schörner's parting words strengthened the spirit of General Nikof so much that he held out in the siege longer than Berlin. Goebbels enthusiastically wrote in his diary: "The fighting turned Breslau into ruins. But the townspeople are desperately fighting for every inch of land. The Soviets shed an incredible amount of blood fighting for Breslau." The city, in which 70% of the buildings were destroyed, was surrendered by the Germans only on May 7, 1945. The losses of the belligerents are known only approximately: the garrison - 6 killed and 40 thousand prisoners, the Red Army - about 8 thousand killed; if you use official

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ny coefficient for the battle for East Prussia, the number of wounded exceeds 29 thousand soldiers and officers. Losses of the civilian population amounted to approximately 80 thousand people, but in general they cannot be counted.

As for the 5th Guards Army, according to General Zhadov, while providing the outer front of the encirclement, for more than two months it "successfully repelled the fierce attacks of the Nazis who were trying to unblock their encircled Breslav grouping."

In exactly the same way, the armies of the left wing "advanced", which went on the attack on February 16, and three days later were forced to go over to a "hard active defense". It is noteworthy that on the maps illustrating the course of this operation, even the designations of the 60th and 59th armies are missing.

Rybalko's tank army fought for Lauban until the end of February. For the Germans, this point was important because a railway passed through it, connecting Silesia with Central Germany and being the main supply artery for Army Group Center. The 23rd Guards Motor Rifle and 56th Guards Tank Brigades of the 7th Tank Corps, the 71st Mechanized Brigade of the 9th Mechanized Corps fought directly in the city with units of the 6th People's Grenadier Division and "parts of the traitor Vlasov", units of the 214th Rifle Division, sappers of the 207th Motorized Engineer Battalion. It was not possible to knock out the Germans. Army Command

noted:

"... the still weak preparation of small units for street battles was revealed. The interaction between infantry and tanks was almost not organized. Artillery and tanks on the streets were not used skillfully enough. Captured quarters were rarely secured. Small infantry units and individual soldiers were not trained to quickly clear houses... The control of company and battalion officers over the actions of squads and platoons was almost absent... fights. As a result of fatigue, the officer corps often began to take a nonchalant attitude

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to issues of combat support and often without proper organization to engage in battle ... long combat experience teaches that as tanks and self-propelled guns work out the established technical standards, they need more frequent technical repairs. To do this, the crews must be given two to three times more than usual time to prepare the materiel for battle. Without taking this into account, tankers are forced to go into battle without sleep and rest for two or more days and with faulty materiel. In such cases, the tankers fight poorly and quickly die from enemy fire themselves.

Exhausted by daily offensive battles, the personnel, which often took place in this operation, are losing their combat capability."

General Schörner transferred additional forces near Lauban and, on the basis of the headquarters of the 24th Panzer Corps, formed the Neringa group consisting of the 39th and 57th Panzer Corps. On the night of March 2, the Germans, with the support of the 8th Air Corps, launched a counteroffensive, bypassing Lauban from the north and south. The northern strike group of General Decker (grenadier division "Führer", parts of the 21st and 17th tank divisions), having thrown back the brigades of the 6th Guards Tank Corps, crossed the Kweis River by March 5 and reached the Logau area. General Kirchner's southern group (8th Panzer, 408th Division, Führer's Escort division) broke through the combat formations of the 9th Mechanized Corps and entered the Naumburg area, effectively closing the encirclement:

"The enemy shot through the battle formations of our troops in the Lauban area with artillery and mortar fire, and then with rifle and machine-gun fire. There was almost no live communication with the 7th Guards Tank Corps and the 9th Mechanized Corps from 7.005.3 to 21.005..3. Communication was maintained mainly by radio. Individual officers penetrated on foot into the 7th Guards Tank Corps and the 9th Mechanized Corps, mainly through the forest and closed terrain. The roads were all cut by the enemy."

In the current situation, the front commander gave sanction for the withdrawal of troops of the 3rd Guards Tank and 52nd armies from the Lauban area. On the night of March 6, a specially detached strike group broke through a corridor through which

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the Soviet troops encircled near Lauban began to leave. In the morning they took up defensive positions 5-6 kilometers north and east of Lauban. During the withdrawal, the commander of the 23rd Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade, Colonel A.A. Golovachev.

Until March 12, the corps of the 3rd Panzer Army, together with units of the 52nd Army, repelled enemy attacks on new lines. Then, "breaking away from the enemy", Rybalko's army was withdrawn to the second echelon of the front for resupplying. From February 1 to March 10, the army lost 370 tanks and self-propelled guns, which were burned out, and 255 combat vehicles remained in service.

The report of General Nering about the battle of Lauban said:

"Although the enemy guessed our intentions and brought up new reserves, he did not manage to prevent the connection of our advanced units that advanced on both sides of the Queiss River, south of Naumburg, as a result of which we achieved our goal.

Enemy losses were significant. We destroyed 149 tanks and 142 anti-tank guns. In addition, a large number of guns, various weapons and trucks were seized ...

After the liberation of Lauban, I visited the city, which was badly damaged by artillery fire. On some days, about 6 thousand shells fell on him. All around one could feel the hatred proclaimed in the pamphlets of Ilya Ehrenburg. The looted houses and the executed citizens testified to what awaits our people, strengthening in our minds the idea of the need to take any measures to ensure the security of the fate of Germany."

Dr. Goebbels, who also visited Lauban, did not sleep at night, kept writing his notes in his diary. "slandorous fabrications":

"Before me lies the order of Marshal Konev to the Soviet troops. Marshal Konev speaks in this order against the robberies carried out by Soviet soldiers in the eastern German territories. It contains individual facts that exactly match our data.

Soviet soldiers seize, first of all, the stocks of vodka available in the eastern German regions, to the point of insensibility on

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drink, put on civilian clothes, a hat or top hat, and ride bicycles east. Konev demands that the commanders take the strictest measures against the decay of the Soviet troops. He also points out that arson and robbery can only be carried out by order. The characterization he gives to these facts is extremely interesting. It shows that, in fact, in the face of Soviet soldiers, we are dealing with steppe scum. This is confirmed by the reports of atrocities that have come to us from the eastern regions. They are truly terrifying. They cannot even be played separately. First of all, mention should be made of the terrible documents that came from Upper Silesia. In some villages and cities, all women from ten to 70 years old were subjected to countless rapes. It seems that this is done by order from above, since one can see an obvious system in the behavior of the Soviet soldiers...

Our soldiers, having seen the atrocities of the Soviets, know no more mercy. They kill Soviet soldiers with shovels and rifle butts. The atrocities the Soviets are guilty of are indescribable. Terrible evidence of this is visible throughout our path.

The loss of Konev's troops for 17 days amounted to 100 thousand people killed and wounded. The troops were at the limit of fatigue. The offensive fizzled out.

In this regard, the Oder operation of the [1st Ukrainian Front] fell out of the category of strategic ones and became known as the Lower Silesian. February 24 was arbitrarily set as the end date for the operation, and the team of the most important Soviet military historians, consisting entirely of Army Generals and colonel generals, announced the goals of the operation: "To defeat the Lower Silesian grouping of the Nazi boundary of the river Neisse and take a more advantageous position for the subsequent offensive on the Berlin and Yarezen directions. All goals invented in hindsight were accordingly achieved, and the actions of the Red Army were very successful: "The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, having broken through the enemy's defenses on a 250

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front, advanced with the right wing more than 100 km, captured the whole of Lower Silesia and entered the German province of Brandenburg. An important role in the success of the operation was played by purposeful party-political work aimed at maintaining a high offensive impulse of the troops, increasing vigilance ... The personnel were brought up in the spirit of a humane attitude towards the German people.

Hunting was to lie? However, the credo of these "researchers" of national history was clearly formulated by the indispensable member and ideological leader of all editorial commissions and sub-commissions, the head of the GlavPUR of the SA and the Navy, General of the Army A.A. Epishev: "Who needs your truth if it interferes with life."

Marshal Konev honestly says: "Not everything worked out", the enemy was strong - the greater our glory: "It must be said right away that our plans, which formed the basis of this plan, were not destined to come true. We intended to carry out the operation to a much greater depth than that which was actually achieved. In fact, by February 24, we completed only part of the task set for ourselves ... The enemy, who suffered heavy defeats, managed to gain a foothold on the Oder line in a short time, put his defeated troops in order, pull up reserves, and organize control. In no case should we belittle the degree of organization shown by the Hitlerite command at that critical moment.

The main result of the February offensive was the exit of the right wing of the front on the Neisse, to the level of the positions of the 1st Belorussian Front, and the occupation of advantageous lines for the final blow in the Berlin direction.

## EAST POMERANIAN OPERATION

On February 8, the commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front received the task of defeating the enemy's East Pomeranian grouping within ten days. There was no time for preparation, and half of the troops were withdrawn from the front. "In the ranks" remained the 2nd shock, 65th, 49th, 70th general

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military, 4th air armies, 1st and 8th guards tank, 8th mechanized, 3rd guards cavalry corps - 36 rifle and 3 cavalry divisions - about 500 thousand people. The troops, in the words of Rokossovsky, were "finally exhausted": two-thirds of the formations numbered 4.5 thousand personnel, there were 297 serviceable tanks, aviation was mostly inactive due to adverse weather conditions, there was an acute lack of fuel and ammunition. The 19th Army (40th Guards, 132nd, 134th Rifle Corps) and the 3rd Guards Tank Corps arrived from the Headquarters reserve, but have not yet arrived.

Rokossovsky: "The Headquarters again set such a task for us, but did not return the troops, knowing in advance that this task was carried out by those forces that remained in our front.  
can not..."

The German 2nd Army opposing them had 12 infantry, 2 tank divisions, 3 separate brigades, 6 battle groups and 3 fortress garrisons. Their forces were estimated at 230 thousand soldiers and officers, 341 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2360 guns and mortars. More than 300 aircraft of various types were based at airfields in Eastern Pomerania.

The Germans carried out intensified work on the engineering equipment of defensive positions and the creation of strong strongholds in the depths of the territory in the most likely directions of the offensive of the Soviet troops. The area itself, replete with forests, swamps, large and small lakes, rivers and canals, had a rather "anti-tank" character and favored the creation of a stable defense. An extensive network of roads made it possible to quickly maneuver forces, the vast majority of settlements were connected by telephone and telegraph communication lines, many of which were laid underground. In addition to field fortifications covered by a network of anti-tank and anti-personnel barriers, in

In full-time Pomerania, there were many stone buildings, as well as long-term fortifications. So, along the former German-Polish border,

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along the line of Stolt, Rummelsburg, Neustettin, Schneidemuhl, with a front to the east and southeast, a section of the "Pomeranian Wall" ran. In addition, the Danzig and Gotenhafen fortified areas built by the front to the southwest were included in the defense system.

Rokossovsky made a decision, creating a "fist" on his left wing, with the forces of the 70th, 49th and 65th armies, the 1st guards tank and 8th mechanized corps to deliver a cutting blow in the direction of Chojnice, Rummelsburg, Rügenwalde. The 2nd shock army, using the crossings of the 65th army, was to reach the western bank of the Vistula and, together with the 8th Guards Tank Corps, advance down the river directly to Danzig. With the approach of the 19th Army, the front aimed at Stettin, while simultaneously clearing the coast of the Baltic Sea from the enemy.

The operation began on the morning of February 10 and developed extremely slowly. The attacks of the Soviet troops were replaced by German counterattacks. During the day, the 70th Army, reinforced by tank and mechanized corps, advanced in separate sectors from 5 to 10 kilometers, the 49th and 65th - by 2-3 kilometers. The formations of General Fedyuninsky did not go on the offensive at all. Part of the Force

The 2nd shock army was still fighting for Elbing, and two rifle corps were regrouping to the left flank, where they were supposed to force the Vistula and capture the "fortress" Graudenz along the way.

Since then, the pace has not changed. In five days of hostilities, the army of General Popov, which achieved the greatest success, "broke" into the enemy's defenses up to 40 kilometers and on February 15 captured the highway and railway junctions of the cities of Konitz (Chojnice) and Tuchel. The armies of Grishinai Batov, operating in the center of the shock group, advanced 15-20 kilometers. The 2nd shock army, stuck at Graudenz, still did not participate in the offensive. Only on February 16 Fedyuninsky brought into battle the 108th Rifle Corps of Lieutenant General V.S. Polenov, who tried to strike along the left bank of the Vistula in a northerly direction.

At the turn of Meve, Chersk, Chojnice, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian

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th front were forced to stop. Rokossovsky stated: "The situation in the north remained the same: the enemy firmly held Pomerania."

On February 15, at the request of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Konstantin Konstantinovich reported his thoughts on the further actions of the front. The marshal was going to deploy the 19th Army and the 3rd Guards Tank Corps on the left wing until February 24, deliver a concentrated attack in the direction of Közlin and break through to the coast of the Baltic Sea within four days, cutting the Pomeranian grouping in two. Stalin agreed with the proposals, and the commander began to prepare the planned operation.

Marshal Zhukov acted for the time being according to the approved plan.

Starting from February 6, one after another, echelons sent from the rear of the front to the "round the world" along the southern route began to arrive, delivering heavy equipment and over 20 thousand tons of ammunition over the next few days.

The combined arms armies of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front at that time continued bloody battles to capture, expand and unite bridgeheads on the Oder: the 5th shock army was north of Kustrin, the 8th guards army was south. The 69th Army fought for Frankfurt, and the 33rd Army tried to cross even further south. By the end of February 7, the Chuikovites, with the support of three light self-propelled artillery regiments, managed to form a bridgehead 15 kilometers along the front and up to 3-5 kilometers in depth. However, in the following days they had to repulse the attacks of the 21st Panzer Division (62 tanks and self-propelled guns), which had arrived from the West. The struggle for bridgeheads, which lasted until the end of March, cost both sides dearly. At Berzarin and Chuikov, an average of 550 people a day dropped out, respectively, in February each of the armies lost about 15 thousand soldiers and officers killed and wounded - almost twice as many as in January. The total losses of the 69th Army from February 10 to February 28 amounted to 5962 people. General Busse, striving to restore the front along the western bank of the Oder, also comes

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It was not easy: every day he lost 745 people killed and wounded. The Russians spent twice as much manpower, but in terms of numbers they outnumbered the German 9th Army by four times.

Significant forces of the 1st Belorussian Front were diverted to eliminate garrisons in the cities of Poznan, Schneidemuhl, Deutsch-Krone, and Arnswalde. In the Lansberg area, in case of any surprises, the 1st Guards Tank Army stood in reserve.

The armies of the right wing, deployed with the front to the north, fought stubborn battles on the line of Kallis, Reetz, Ban, Grabov. They could not reach the line indicated by Zhukov in the directive of February 4. Enemy resistance sharply increased due to the influx of new units into the Army Group "Vistula". First, the II Marine Division "Admiral Doenitz" and the 2nd Reserve Corps of General Walter Hoerlein, under whose command the 4th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Policeman" arrived, stood in the way of Bogdanov's tank army. The regular units were diluted with Volkssturm battalions, which stubbornly defended the communications centers. Soon they were joined by the 163rd Infantry Division, which arrived from Norway, under the command of General Karl Ryubel. The 10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg", the 11th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Nordland", the 27th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Langemark", the 28th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Wallonia" were also sent to Pomerania. ", freshly baked tank division "Golyshtein", infantry division "Escort of the Fuhrer", grenadier division "Fuhrer", 503rd SS heavy tank battalion (39 "Royal Tigers").

By February 10, the Germans had put together a new, 11th Army, which occupied a strip to the west of the 2nd Army. The command of the formation, which included the 3rd SS Panzer Corps, the 10th SS Panzer Corps and the 39th Panzer Corps, was entrusted to SS-Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner, who began his career on the Eastern Front as commander of an SS motorized division "Viking". In mid-February, he had 12 divisions of various levels of staffing under his command.

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Zhukov had no information about the enemy and his intentions. In an orientation dated February 4, he assessed the situation as follows: "Apparently, in the next 6-7 days, the enemy will concentrate troops brought in from the Baltic states and East Prussia on the Schwedt-Stargard-Neustettin line in order to cover Pomerania and prevent us from reaching Stettin and prevent our access to the Pomeranian Bay. But, knowing from his own experience the German "habits", the marshal was very worried about his right flank. And not in vain.

In early February, General Guderian proposed a plan of operation against "the still weak flanks of the Russian wedge driven by them into our defenses up to the Oder." One blow was delivered in a southerly direction from the Piritz region in Pomerania, the other - from Glogau - to the north. "Pincers" were supposed to close in the Poznan area. "By this I hoped," writes Guderian, "to strengthen the defense of the capital of the Reich and, in general, the defense of the territory of the country, and win the time necessary for negotiating an armistice with the Western powers." To ensure guaranteed success, it was necessary to create powerful strike groups in a short time, therefore, abandon the offensive in Hungary and withdraw troops at least from the Baltic states, and also from Italy and the Balkan countries. With his ideas, Guderian only succeeded in driving Hitler out of himself. Before the eyes of the petrified ministers who witnessed "such a violation of court etiquette", the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the General Staff yelled at each other like the last bandages. "Worlds opened up!" exclaims Speer. The daily meetings between Hitler and Guderian proceeded more and more violently and less and less constructively: "He stood before me with raised fists, and my good chief of staff, Tomale, dragged me back by the coattails of my uniform, fearing that hand-to-hand combat would begin between us. "

After fierce disputes, it was decided by the forces of the 11th Army to strike from Pomerania in order to reach the rear of the 1st Belorussian Front and defeat the Russians north of the Warta River. Since the allocated forces were still insufficient, Guderian insisted on carrying out an offensive "with

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with lightning speed, until the Russians brought large forces to the front or until they figured out our intentions", without waiting for the complete concentration of all troops and material support: "We cannot wait until the last barrel of gasoline and the last box of shells are unloaded. During this time, the Russians will become even stronger." For direct

leadership of the operation, which received the code name "Solstice", he proposed the candidacy of General Wenck, who was seconded to Himmler's headquarters.

On February 10, Zhukov sent a plan for the Berlin offensive operation to Stalin. After analyzing the opposing German grouping, the marshal formulated the goal of his further actions: "To disrupt the enemy's operational concentration, to break through his defenses on the western bank of the river. Oder and capture the city of Berlin.

The breakthrough of the defense was supposed to be carried out in narrow areas with a concentration of 250-300 artillery pieces per kilometer of the front. The 47th, 5th shock, 8th guards, 69th and 33rd armies were involved in the offensive in the Berlin direction. Actually, the troops of Chuikov, Kolpakchi and Tsvetaev were supposed to enter Berlin.

The 5th shock and 47th armies were to move around Berlin in order to cover the assault on the city from enemy counterattacks from the northwest direction. In their bands it was supposed to introduce tank armies into the breakthrough. I Guards Tank Army received the task of capturing the eastern and north-eastern parts of the capital of the Reich. The 2nd Guards Tank Army was to break into Berlin from the northwest.

Summing up, Zhukov wrote:

"The regrouping of forces and means from the right flank of the front on the river. I can start the Oder only with the transition of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the offensive, i.e. from 10.2.45 to 16.2.45 In connection with this, the troops destined for action on Berlin will be prepared for the attack on Berlin only on 19-20. 2.45.

I can start the attack on Berlin on 20.2.45.

On February 12, in the Lebus area, without artillery preparation, the 69th Army crossed the Oder on ice, forming two

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bridgehead and cutting the Frankfurt-Küstrin railway. Moreover, the 77th Guards Division of General Askalepov distinguished himself again. On the same day, the commander of the 47th Army received an order at 19.00 to start a march from the Deutsch-Krone area in order to reach the Oder by the morning of February 16. To liquidate the German group encircled in Schneidemühl, Major General Kuzmin's operational group, the 125th Rifle Corps with reinforcement units, was detached from the army. On the night of February 13, Zhukov sent operational directives for the Berlin operation to all the armies of the front. The commanders had to submit their plans for approval on February 17 by 12.00.

On February 13, Colonel Heinz Revlinger, commandant of the "fortress" Schneidemühl, having lost the last airfield and left without ammunition, decided to make his way north without permission. The garrison was divided into motorized and foot columns with a total number of about 8000 people and at 20.00, without artillery preparation, moved to the breakthrough. They did not expect any kind of "arrogance" from them: "General Kuzmin mistakenly believed that the enemy troops were demoralized and would not try to break out of the encirclement." The Germans crushed the battle formations of the 185th Infantry Division, in which "reconnaissance was poorly organized, and insufficient attention was paid to the organization of battle at night", and the forests left.

Colonel Revlinger immediately reported the breakthrough to Himmler by radio. Judging by the memoirs of Raus, the Reichsfuehrer approved the decision:

"Himmler listened attentively to the message, then hung up and jumped up. In joyous excitement he ran up and down the room, exclaiming, "Did you hear that? Revlinger did it! He did it! I said he would do it!"



"Naturally, I agreed with the decision that Revlinger made on his own, and expressed the hope that a large number of these brave soldiers could reach our positions by hiding in the forests. Then we discussed for quite some time the possibility of incorporating this detachment into our Uborona system, when suddenly the phone rang again. I listened to Hitler's order transmitted through the OKH. He demanded that

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Revlinger and his garrison returned to Schneidemühl and continued to defend it.

"No, you are absolutely right. I will not pass this order on," Himmler told me.

February 14 Soviet troops, destroying part of the cover, occupied the burning Schneidemühl. After that, Kuzmin led the 125th Rifle Corps to the Oder, and the destruction of the group that had broken through was entrusted to the 79th Rifle Corps of the 3rd Shock Army. Four days later, both German detachments were dispersed, Revlinger and his staff were captured.

And everything seems to be fine. However, on February 16, Felix Steiner hit the northern flank of the 1st Belorussian Front from the area of Altdamm and Stargard. The 10th SS Panzer Division Frundsberg, the 4th SS Panzer Grenadier Division Polizei, the 11th SS Panzer Grenadier Division Nordland, the 23rd Panzer Grenadier Division SS "Netherlands", units of the 28th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Wallonia", 503rd SS Heavy Tank Battalion, Panzer Divisions "Holstein" and "Schlesien", Division "Führer" with the 911th Assault Brigade guns and the division "Escort of the Führer".

It should be noted that the division "Wallonia" consisted of only about 3 thousand people, that is, it was just a reinforced regiment. The Nordland division had 30 tanks and 30 self-propelled guns, the Führer division had 56 tanks and 32 5 Sh units, and the Holstein division had 25 tanks. In the most combat-ready unit, the SS division "Frundsberg", there were over 20 thousand personnel, 87 tanks and 28 self-propelled anti-aircraft guns and tank destroyers. Taking into account the battalion of "tigers" (17 serviceable vehicles), there were about 300 units of armored vehicles in two shock groups. It is unlikely that they could break through the rear of the 1st Belorussian Front, and even more so defeat its tank armies and encircle part of the Soviet troops. In any case, not in 1945 and not under the leadership of Himmler.

Rules, on the first day, the Germans, having pushed the units of the 47th and 61st armies 8-12 kilometers to the south, managed to capture Ban and

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Piritz, break through the corridor to Arnswalde and release your troops. But there was no breakthrough of the Soviet front. Repeated counterattacks by the corps of Bogdanov's 2nd Guards Tank Army resulted in a head-on battle with enemy tanks, in which neither side was able to achieve decisive success. The German General Staff almost began to open bottles of champagne: "On February 16 and 17, the offensive was very successful; we began to hope, despite all the difficulties and doubts, for the success of this operation, hoping to get the time necessary for further activities. Steiner managed to stop the advance of the right wing of the Byelorussian Front, take 3,000 prisoners, and force the Russians to move back slightly. But only. The Panthers were short of fuel: "The crews had orders that if the tank was hit, their first task was to drain the fuel as soon as the enemy's fire weakened." Air support was almost non-existent. To top it off, General Wenck was seriously injured in a car accident, "and with him disappeared Guderian's last chance to keep the Arnswald operation under personal control." The German offensive ground to a halt

starting.

Zhukov, having sufficient forces on his right flank, "despite some complication of the situation," believed that the main task of the troops subordinate to him was to prepare and conduct an offensive operation in the Berlin direction. At the same time, without distraction from

main goal, you can help Rokossovsky. All the more so since no one canceled the order of the Stavka 'Ob for the capture of Berlin.

On February 16, Georgy Konstantinovich proposed the following option: in order to assist the 2nd Belorussian Front, deliver a strong blow to the enemy and, throwing him back to the north, go to the front of Lubov, Tempelburg, Falkenburg, Goll-Now and cut off the retreat routes of the Pomeranian grouping of the enemy to the west. To accomplish this task, the 61st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, the 7th Guards Cavalry and 9th Tank Corps, the 1st Army of the Polish Army and part of the forces of the 3rd Shock Army were involved. The remaining forces of the right wing of the front were to continue to carry out

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previously set tasks to reach the line of the Oder River. And this decision was approved by the Headquarters, and on February 19, the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front went on the offensive in the sector from Kallis to Ban. And again the attacks were replaced by counter-attacks with the front line unchanged. There is even such a wording: "The formations of the 2nd Guards Tank Army, operating in the Stargard direction and in the areas of Piritz and Ban, could not go on the offensive, as they were tied up in heavy battles, repelling the enemy's counterattacks." It is interesting that in our military-historical annals this battle was not even given a name and no casualties appear in static collections.

On February 21, by directive sent to Army Groups Vistula and Center, Hitler announced the end of Operation Solstice. The Germans abandoned Arnswalde and retreated to the north. Steiner's headquarters, which had lost confidence, was transferred to the other side of the Oder, where it began to act as a headquarters for gathering stragglers. One corps administration and three divisions, including the SS Panzer Frundsberg, were transferred from the 11th Army to the Center group, the Fuhrer Fans were sent to patch holes in Silesia. The remaining formations were taken under command by the headquarters of the 3rd Panzer Army, which was removed from Koenigsberg.

In the analytical review presented to Hitler on February 26, compiled by the Foreign Armies of the East department, it was assumed that after the failure of the German counterattack in the Stargard area, the Soviet side would concentrate its main efforts "exclusively on the decisive western direction." However, the Fuhrer, according to Goebbels' notes, was convinced "that the Soviets did not intend to immediately move on Berlin" and expected the strike of the Soviet armies in Eastern Pomerania:

"Our General Staff officers expected from the Soviets exactly the same mistake that we ourselves made in the late autumn of 1941 when developing plans for the encirclement of Moscow, namely: to go straight to the enemy's capital, not looking either to the right or to the left and not worrying about covering the flanks. We did a great job with this at the time. And the Fuhrer is constantly underlining

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the wave that the Soviets would not repeat this mistake, but his generals did not want to believe him.

And Hitler was right again.

The "solstice" and the concentration of enemy forces on the flanks made Headquarters and the General Staff think, what if the Germans were able to deliver a more powerful blow, especially since it was not clear where the 6th SS Panzer Army had disappeared:

"In the current situation, the Germans could seize the initiative from us and disrupt the planned operation ...

Even with its last gasp, the fascist beast remained a dangerous beast, capable of taking hundreds of thousands of human lives to the grave. And besides, the failure near Berlin threatened to turn into bad political consequences...

The Headquarters, the General Staff, the military councils of the fronts again and again compared our capabilities with those of the enemy, and ultimately came to the same conclusion: not having accumulated sufficient supplies of materiel on the Oder, not being able to use the full power of aviation and artillery, not securing flanks, we cannot throw our armies on the offensive against the capital of Germany. The risk in this case was misplaced. The political and military consequences in case of failure at the final stage of the war could be extremely difficult and irreparable for us."

No matter how real or illusory the threat was, Stalin did not want the slightest bit of risk. He remembered very well how in 1920 "Give Berlin" turned into "Miracle on the Vistula".

A completely logical decision followed from this: to finish off the enemy's East Pomeranian grouping as soon as possible and free up as many forces as possible to deliver a decisive blow in the Berlin direction. Fortunately, there was still time left: the Allied armies had barely begun their movement towards the Rhine.

As early as February 20, Zhukov reported to the Headquarters on the need for a temporary transition to a tough defense along the entire 1st Belorussian Front. Before the offensive of the troops of the 2nd Belo

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On the Russian front, the marshal intended to wear down the enemy, and then, with part of his forces, strike at the Gollns in order to cut off the German grouping in Eastern Pomerania from the rest of Germany. If Rokossovsky was successful, it was supposed to go on the offensive with all the forces of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front in the north-western direction and by joint efforts completely destroy the enemy in Pomerania. With a strike from the area east of Arnswalde, Zhukov planned to dismember the enemy troops and reach the coast of the Baltic Sea and the Oder - from Kolberg to Zeden. The 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 3rd Shock Army with the 9th Tank Corps and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the 2nd Guards Tank Army - to the north and northwest in the direction of Cammin and Gollnov. The 47th Army with the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps were to strike at Altdamm. The commander of the front forces planned to defeat the main forces of the 11th army of the enemy within five to seven days, and to clear the entire territory of Pomerania west of the Neustettin, Kerlin, Kolberg meridian to the Oder River - within 14-16 days.

Thus, the general plan, approved by the Headquarters on February 22, was to dismember the opposing Army Group "Vistula", cut off its large part of the main forces of the German army and destroy. After capturing the city of Kezlin and reaching the coast of the Baltic Sea, Rokossovsky's troops were to turn around to the east and advance on Danzig and Gotenhafen (Gdynia), clear the eastern part of Pomerania from the enemy and capture all the ports from Danzig to Kolberg. It was assumed that Zhukov's troops would turn west in order to reach the Pomeranian Bay and clear the right bank of the Oder from the enemy in the area from the mouth to Tseden.

Guderian still managed to turn the Soviet troops from

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Berlin to the north, to Pomerania, and prolong the agony of the Reich for two months.

During the preliminary discussion of the operation, Rokossovsky proposed to combine the attacks of the adjacent flanks of the two fronts in time, but he had to start alone. Zhukov was allowed to speak when he was ready, but no later than March 1.

The offensive of the 2nd Belorussian Front resumed on February 24. After a 40-minute artillery preparation — on a 10-kilometer breakthrough section, the density was at least 150 barrels per kilometer, not counting rocket artillery — the infantry of the 19th Army, Lieutenant General G.K. Kozlova, without escort tanks and air support, struck at the junction of Raus and Weiss - from the area southwest of Chojnice to Kezlin. In this direction, the formations of the 18th mountain rifle corps of the 2nd German army were defended, which included the 32nd infantry division, the remnants of the 15th (Latvian) SS division, the SS Charlemagne brigade, renamed the 33rd Waffen Grenadier - division, spare and training units.

On the first day, Kozlov's army managed to break through the enemy's defenses to a depth of 10-12 kilometers. The width of the breakthrough reached 20 kilometers. On the morning of February 25, with the improvement of meteorological conditions, Soviet aircraft took to the air to support the ground troops. At 11:00 a.m., the 3rd Guards Tank Corps, Lieutenant General A.P. Panfilov (274 tanks and self-propelled guns); tank brigades were assigned one rifle regiment of the 313th rifle division. Having entered the gap, the corps broke away from the infantry and advanced up to 40 kilometers in a day. The troops of the 70th Army, having met stubborn resistance, traveled only 4-6 kilometers in the first two days. Other armies fought on the former lines: the 65th and 2nd shock troops "successfully repelled enemy attacks", and the Germans even drove the 49th army out of Ossovo.

On February 26, the advance detachments of Panfilov's tank corps captured Baldenberg and Schenau, and the next day, Bublitz. In order to ensure the left flank of the strike force of the front, the 3rd Guards

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cavalry corps of General Oslikovsky. However, the rifle corps of General G.K. Kozlov's troops were not advancing fast enough, falling further and further behind the tankers, losing division control and causing acute dissatisfaction with the front command: "In two days, the infantry traveled only 25 kilometers. A lot of forces were taken away by enemy strongholds, which were bypassed by the tank corps. The Nazis had to be beaten out of them with great difficulty, which, of course, reduced the pace of the offensive. But the reason was not only this. There was a bad command of the troops. Commander kept losing contact with formations, was late in making decisions. These two days of fighting showed that he could not cope with such a large association as the army, and even with the means of reinforcement attached to it. In a complex, constantly changing offensive environment, he showed confusion, inability to influence the development of events. Rokossovsky was forced to stop the advance of the 3rd Guards Tank Corps and reported to Moscow about the need to replace the commander-19.

On February 27, the offensive stalled: the formations of the 19th Army were putting themselves in order at the reached lines, the brigades of General Panfilov, in anticipation of the approach of the main forces, took up all-round defense in the Bublitza area, and other armies were also not happy with success. All forces were already thrown into battle.

"For the first time during the war," recalls Rokossovsky, "I, the commander of the front, was left without reserves and, frankly, I didn't feel well ... As the troops moved north, our left flank became more and more exposed: after all, our neighbor is 1 th Belorussian Front - remained in place. The enemy began to more and more often strike at the flanks and rear of our advancing units ...

Soon I was summoned to the HF by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. I reported to him the situation on our front and the situation developing on the left wing. Stalin asked:

- What, Zhukov is cunning?

"I don't think," I replied, "that he is cunning, but that his troops are not advancing and this creates a threat to the naked

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our flank, I can confirm. We do not have the strength to secure the flank now, the reserve is all exhausted. Therefore, I ask you to strengthen the front with troops or to oblige the 1st Belorussian to quickly go on the offensive.

On February 28, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front resumed their attacks and, having expanded the breakthrough sector to 70 kilometers, captured the cities of Prehlau, Neustettin and other strongholds. The 70th Army, reinforced by the 8th Mechanized Corps of Major General A.M. Firsanovich, managed to advance up to 10 kilometers, and the 49th Army returned Ossovo.

The Germans tried to organize a counterattack on the right flank of the 19th Army from Rummelsburg with the forces of the 7th Panzer Corps (7th Panzer Division, 4th SS Police Division, 226th Assault Gun Brigade). However, Rokossovsky, having received an intelligence report about the "suspicious fuss" of the enemy, ordered the 40th Rifle Corps of Lieutenant General S.P. to turn to the northeast. Mikulsky, reinforce the corps with artillery, provide him with all possible air support and take Rummelsburg. From the west, in order to restore CONTACT with the Weiss army, General Raus sent his only reserve to Rummelsburg, Colonel Joachim Hesse's Panzer Division Holstein, but the Russians did not take the Russians by surprise: "After the first small successes, the division was thrown back."

With the transition to the offensive of the armies of Marshal Zhukov, the affairs of

Rokossovsky went more cheerfully. On March 3, the right-flank formations of the 19th Army, after stubborn battles that were fought day and night, drove the enemy out of Rummelsburg, dispersing the counterstrike grouping of General Kessel. This allowed the 3rd Guards Tank Corps to resume the Yarodvizhenie and reach the coast of the Baltic Sea north of Közlin, which was taken on March 4th. \*. Thus, by March 5, the troops of the left wing of the 2nd Beyurussky Front had cut the Eastern Pomeranian grouping of the enemy into two parts. The escape routes to the west were cut off for the Weiss army.

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The troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front (27 rifle divisions, 3 cavalry divisions, 4 tank divisions, 2 mechanized corps, 2 separate tank brigades) completed preparations for the operation at the end of February. 400 thousand people, 6585 guns and mortars, 864 rocket launchers, 1515 tanks and self-propelled guns were concentrated in the 240-kilometer zone. The density of artillery in the breakthrough areas reached the already standard 250 barrels per kilometer.

They were opposed by the battered troops of the 11th German Army, which, from February 25, was headed by the headquarters of the 3rd Panzer Army of General Raus. In his submission there were 10 divisions of varying degrees of combat capability, including one tank and three tank-grenadier divisions. The formations of the 3rd SS Panzer Corps of the 10th SS Army Corps were significantly weakened during the failed counteroffensive. In any case, Soviet historians claim that "the enemy formations, abandoned by him to carry out counterattacks, lost about 70 thousand killed, captured and wounded." The consolidated corps "Hoerlein" consisted of one division and prefabricated units. The composition of the left-flank composite corps "Tettau" included the reserve divisions "Pomerania" and "Berwalde", formed from Volksgrenadier battalions and units created on the basis of construction and logistics services. These divisions had neither artillery, nor anti-tank units, nor communications battalions.

In total, according to Soviet data, the army had about 200 thousand soldiers and officers, 2500 guns and mortars, 700 tanks and assault guns. True, Raus insists that he had 240 field guns, and only 70 atanks:

"Even before I officially took command, I gave the order to start building a dense network of anti-tank barriers in the rear of the army, where there were many forests and lakes. Such terrain was very well suited for the organization of anti-tank defense. In a few days, with the energetic help of party members and the local population, these barriers were

installed on all bridges, at the entrances to villages, as well as on roads and highways in those places where  
They

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entered the forest. Courageous Volkssturm soldiers, who were trained to use Panzerfausts, guarded these barriers. In addition, soldiers with anti-tank weapons were ready to quickly appear on bicycles and motorcycles where needed. The entire civil telephone network was turned into a warning system in case tanks appeared. Never before had a piece of territory been turned so quickly into a continuous anti-tank network, as we were able to do in Pomerania. Our goal was to prevent the Russian tanks, even if they broke through the front, to rapidly move on.

On the morning of March 1, after a strong (Raus writes - "terrible") artillery and aviation preparation, the divisions of the 61st and 3rd shock armies went on the attack. On the same day, both tank armies were brought into the battle. The 1st Guards (584 tank self-propelled guns), overtaking the infantry of the 3rd shock, rammed the battle formations of General Friedrich Sixt's 5th Chasseur Division and advanced 20-25 kilometers by evening. The offensive of the 2nd Guards (276 tanks and self-propelled guns), introduced to the left, in the zone of the 61st Army, developed slowly: by the end of the day it had overcome 5-7 kilometers, but could not complete the breakthrough. The 47th Army and the 1st Army of the Polish Army did not go over to the offensive.

In the days that followed, fierce fighting broke out in Eastern Pomerania.

On March 2, expanding the front of hostilities, the troops of the 47th Army of General Perkhovich moved forward, having the task of capturing the city of Altdamm on the fourth day of the offensive and reaching the Oder with the main forces. Breaking through the enemy defenses was assigned to the 77th and 125th Rifle Corps, then the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps was brought into the battle. However, by the end of March 3, the troops of the 47th Army

We only went 20 kilometers and the task was not PERFORMED.

Formations of the 61st and 2nd Panzer Armies on the second day ran into a prepared line of defense on the Faienwalde, Marienflesse line and were drawn into protracted frontal

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battles with the 3rd SS Panzer Corps (23rd, 27th, 28th Panzergrenadier Divisions, 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion), commanded by General Martin Unrain. In this situation, the front commander ordered General Bogdanov to go around the fortified positions of the enemy and strike at his flank and rear. Fulfilling these instructions, the main forces of the 2nd Guards Tank Army made a deep maneuver, entered the gap in the zone of the 3rd Shock Army, and on March 3 hit Naugard and Gollnov. To cover this area, the Germans hastily began the return transfer of the SS division "Fruntsberg" to Pomerania.

Katukov's tankers were the most successful. On March 3, the forward units of the 11th Guards Tank Corps, Colonel A.Kh. Babadzhanyan came to the southwestern outskirts of Kolberg, declared a "fortress". A day later, the 1st Guards Tank Army, having advanced more than 90 kilometers, reached the coast of the Baltic Sea in the Kolberg-Deep sector. This finally cut off the escape routes of the enemy grouping from the Köslin area, which was trying to get out from under the blow of the troops of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front. For reliability, Zhukov ordered the tankers to destroy all crossings on the Perzante River from Kolberg to Belgrade.

The rapid advance of the shock grouping of the 1st Belorussian Front led to the isolation southwest of Poltsin of the main forces of the 10th SS Corps and the corps group "Tgettau". To cut off their escape routes, Zhukov ordered: General Simonyak deploy to the right the 7th Rifle Corps of Major General V.A. Chistov, Katukov to allocate tank brigades to help, general